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Attorney's Docket No. 006128/260159

PATENTS



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

re Application of **Becerra et al.**

Application Serial No.: **10/664,483**

Filed: **September 19, 2003**

For: **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR PROVIDING
INSURANCE AND NON-INSURANCE PRODUCTS**

Group Art Unit: 3626

Examiner: Pass, Natalie

Box PETITION
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

**PETITION TO MAKE SPECIAL – ACCELERATED EXAMINATION
(MPEP 708.02, Part VIII)**

Sir:

The Applicant hereby petitions to make this application special pursuant to the Advancement of Examination procedures set forth 37 C.F.R. § 1.102(d) and MPEP 708.02 on the grounds that a search of the prior art has been made.

REMARKS

In accordance with MPEP 708.02, Part VIII, subparagraphs (A) through (E), the Applicant states as follows:

(A) **Petition Fee.** Please charge Deposit Account No. 16-0605 in the amount of \$130.00 for the Petition Fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.102(d) and 1.17(h). Any additional fee or credit associated with this Response may be charged to our Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

(B) **Willingness to Make an Election without Traverse, if Required.** The Applicant is confident that all the claims in the present application are directed to a single

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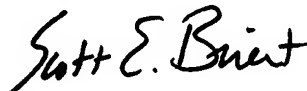
Claim 17 is patentable over the *Care Four* publication. Claims 18-30 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *Care Four* publication.

CONCLUSION

Having satisfied the requirements for the Advancement of Examination as set forth in 37 C.F.R. § 1.102(d) and MPEP 708.02, the Applicant hereby seeks accelerated examination of this patent application.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any fee, or credit any refund, to our Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date of Deposit December 20, 2005

I hereby certify that this paper or fee is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to:

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Laisha Richardson

invention. The claims, as filed, do not define independent and distinct inventions; therefore, no restriction should be required.

Nevertheless, if the Office determines that the claims are not directed to a single invention, then the Applicant will make an election without traverse as a prerequisite to the grant of special status for the present application. The Applicant prefers, however, to defer any required election until the Office determines that a restriction is required and, then, to make any such election using the established telephone restriction practice, as permitted in MPEP 708.02, Part VIII (B).

(C) Search Made. The Applicant has conducted a pre-examination search including U.S. Class/Subclasses: 705/4, 705/10, and 705/26. Applicant has also conducted a search via the Internet.

(D) Submission of References. Attached to this Petition, and incorporated herein by reference, are copies of the references deemed by the Applicant to be the references identified within the search that are the most closely related to the subject matter encompassed by the claims of the present application. Below is a list of these references. By listing the references below, Applicant in no way admits that the references should be considered "prior art" to the current application.

PATENT REFERENCES

Patent/ Application No.	Issue/ Publication Date	Inventor	Title
6,519,470	Feb. 11, 2003	Rydbeck	<i>Automated Warranty Registration</i>
6,208,853	Mar. 27, 2001	LoVasco, et al.	<i>Methods for Registering a Warranty for a Wireless Device</i>
2001/0051884	Dec. 13, 2001	Wallis, et al.	<i>Method and System for Controlling Warranty-Related Data and Services</i>
2001/0042022	Nov. 15, 2001	Kirkpatrick, et al.	<i>Systems and Methods for Point of Purchase Product Registration</i>

OTHER REFERENCES

Publication Name/Company Name	Publication Date	Article or Advertisement Title	Reference Location
<i>McGill News, Alumni Quarterly</i>	Spring, 1999	At Your Service, Financial and Insurance Services, McGill Affinity VISA Card	http://www.news- archive.mcgill.ca/sp99/service.htm
<i>Freebie-of-the- Day Website</i>	Listed as May 10, 2000	May 10 – Free Warranties	http://www.freebie-of-the- day.com/MAY.HTM
<i>HP (#1)</i>	Offer listed as available Feb. 15-March 15, 2002	HP “Protect Your Investment” Offer	http://www.amazon.com/exec/obido s/tg/feature/-/255067/103-4180325- 1637437
<i>Harmony Audio Video</i>	(identified in search conducted on Feb. 21, 2003)	Free Extended Warranties	http://www.harmonyaudiovideo.com /Sales_Policies/sales_policies.shtml
<i>Hi-Tech E Commerce</i>	(identified in search conducted on Feb. 21, 2003)	Free extended warranty	http://hitechmall.com/canon/frexwa rr.htm (no longer available)
<i>HP (#2)</i>	Offer listed as being available March 18- June 19, 2002		http://www.hp.com/go/mfp22 (no longer available)

Publication Name/Company Name	Publication Date	Article or Advertisement Title	Reference Location
<i>American Standard Advertisement</i>	Sept. 23, 1999	Advertisement	The Morning News, Thursday September 23, 1999, pg. A5
<i>Barclaycard</i>	(identified in search conducted on Feb. 21, 2003)	Extended Warranty	http://www.barclaycard.co.uk/Card_Benefits/Warranty (no longer available)
<i>Care Four (UK) Ltd – Electrical Retailing Show Report</i>	April 22-24, 2001	The ER Show	http://www.care4.co.uk/er_show_report.htm (no longer available)

U.S. Patent No. 6,519,470 to Rydbeck

U.S. Patent No. 6,519,470 to Rydbeck (hereinafter “*Rydbeck*”) teaches a method for determining when a warranty period for a wireless communications device begins. (*Rydbeck*, col. 2, lines 21-23). *Rydbeck* further discloses a “communications device” which includes “a warranty registration status indicator” and a transmitter, wherein the transmitter automatically sends a message containing a unique identifier to a warranty registration center to cause a warranty period to start. (*Rydbeck*, col. 9, lines 55-62). *Rydbeck* further discloses a “receiver for receiving an acknowledgment from said warranty registration center indicating that the warranty period associated with the communications device has started.” (*Rydbeck*, col. 9, lines 63-67).

However, *Rydbeck* does not teach or suggest a method of providing insurance to a customer that comprises the steps of: selling a service contract to the customer, the service contract providing protection against the mechanical breakdown or other failure of an item, and in response to the customer purchasing the service contract, providing, at

no cost to the customer, insurance coverage that protects the customer against damage or other loss to the item, as required by Claim 1 of the present application. Therefore, Claim 1 is patentable over *Rydbeck*. Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *Rydbeck*.

Rydbeck also does not teach or suggest a method of processing a request that an item be repaired or replaced that comprises: receiving the request at a central claim processing facility; determining whether the item requires replacement or repair due to (1) an event covered under a service contract provided by a first provider, or (2) an event covered under an insurance policy provided by a second provider; in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to an event under the service contract, submitting a request to the first provider to process the item according to the service contract; and in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to loss under the insurance policy, submitting a request to the second provider to process the item according to the insurance policy, as required by Claim 10. Therefore, Claim 10 is patentable over *Rydbeck*. Claims 11-16 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *Rydbeck*.

Rydbeck also does not teach or suggest a property protection program that comprises first property coverage that is paid for by a first entity and second property coverage that is paid for by a second entity, as required by Claim 17. Therefore, Claim 17 is patentable over *Rydbeck*. Claims 18-30 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *Rydbeck*.

U.S. Patent No. 6,208,853 to LoVasco, et al.

U.S. Patent No. 6,208,853 to LoVasco, et al. (hereinafter “LoVasco”) discloses a “method for registering a warranty for a wireless remote unit in a wireless communication network” including detecting an activation of the remote unit by a user and transmitting a warranty message from the remote unit via the wireless communication network so as to register the warranty information. (*LoVasco*, col. 6, lines 31-44). *LoVasco* also discloses a “method for registering a warranty in a wireless communication network, said wireless communication network comprising a message center having a message storage and a message server,” wherein one can access “said message storage by said message server periodically to retrieve said stored warranty information.” (*LoVasco*, col. 7, lines 4-18).

However, *LoVasco* does not teach or suggest a method of providing insurance to a customer that comprises the steps of: selling a service contract to the customer, the service contract providing protection against the mechanical breakdown or other failure of an item, and in response to the customer purchasing the service contract, providing, at no cost to the customer, insurance coverage that protects the customer against damage or other loss to the item, as required by Claim 1 of the present application. Therefore, Claim 1 is patentable over *LoVasco*. Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *LoVasco*.

LoVasco also does not teach or suggest a method of processing a request that an item be repaired or replaced that comprises: receiving the request at a central claim processing facility; determining whether the item requires replacement or repair due to

(1) an event covered under a service contract provided by a first provider, or (2) an event covered under an insurance policy provided by a second provider; in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to an event under the service contract, submitting a request to the first provider to process the item according to the service contract; and in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to loss under the insurance policy, submitting a request to the second provider to process the item according to the insurance policy, as required by Claim 10. Therefore, Claim 10 is patentable over *LoVasco*. Claims 11-16 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *LoVasco*.

LoVasco also does not teach or suggest a property protection program that comprises first property coverage that is paid for by a first entity and second property coverage that is paid for by a second entity, as required by Claim 17. Therefore, Claim 17 is patentable over *LoVasco*. Claims 18-30 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *LoVasco*.

U.S. Patent App. No. 2001/0051884 to Wallis, et al.

U.S. Patent No. 2001/0051884 to Wallis, et al. (hereinafter “*Wallis*”) discloses a “system and method of controlling warranty-related data and services” including providing “centralized management of warranty programs for product vendors and purchasers.” (*Wallis*, Abstract). In particular, *Wallis* discloses that “Data related to sales of products covered by warranties is compiled and processed and user-specific documents are generated.” (*Id.*). Furthermore, *Wallis* discloses “establishing an

association between each one of the at least one of the plurality of products and ... the warranty plan corresponding thereto.” (*Wallis*, pg. 7, Claim 9). *Wallis* also discloses a system server that provides “a web site that allows a product purchaser to request a repair of a product under warranty, and then automatically arranges for the repair to be made by contacting a parcel delivery service and a repair center.” (*Wallis*, Abstract).

However, *Wallis* does not teach or suggest a method of providing insurance to a customer that comprises the steps of: selling a service contract to the customer, the service contract providing protection against the mechanical breakdown or other failure of an item, and in response to the customer purchasing the service contract, providing, at no cost to the customer, insurance coverage that protects the customer against damage or other loss to the item, as required by Claim 1 of the present application. Therefore, Claim 1 is patentable over *Wallis*. Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *Wallis*.

Wallis also does not teach or suggest a method of processing a request that an item be repaired or replaced that comprises: receiving the request at a central claim processing facility; determining whether the item requires replacement or repair due to (1) an event covered under a service contract provided by a first provider, or (2) an event covered under an insurance policy provided by a second provider; in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to an event under the service contract, submitting a request to the first provider to process the item according to the service contract; and in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to loss under the insurance policy, submitting a request to the second provider

to process the item according to the insurance policy, as required by Claim 10. Therefore, Claim 10 is patentable over *Wallis*. Claims 11-16 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *Wallis*.

Wallis also does not teach or suggest a property protection program that comprises first property coverage that is paid for by a first entity and second property coverage that is paid for by a second entity, as required by Claim 17. Therefore, Claim 17 is patentable over *Wallis*. Claims 18-30 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *Wallis*.

U.S. Patent App. No. 2001/0042022 to Kirkpatrick, et al.

U.S. Patent No. 2001/0042022 to Kirkpatrick, et al. (hereinafter "*Kirkpatrick*") discloses systems and methods for allowing retail entities to have consumers register a product or warranty with an associated manufacturer at the point of sale of an item. (*Kirkpatrick*, pg. 1, para. 0008). *Kirkpatrick* further discloses a method for product registration comprising "employing product registration data for providing information associated with the product to a user" wherein the information associated with the product includes information about a product recall, information about warranty expiration, and information about similar products. (*Kirkpatrick*, pg. 7, Claims 4-7).

However, *Kirkpatrick* does not teach or suggest a method of providing insurance to a customer that comprises the steps of: selling a service contract to the customer, the service contract providing protection against the mechanical breakdown or other failure of an item, and in response to the customer purchasing the service contract, providing, at

no cost to the customer, insurance coverage that protects the customer against damage or other loss to the item, as required by Claim 1 of the present application. Therefore, Claim 1 is patentable over *Kirkpatrick*. Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *Kirkpatrick*.

Kirkpatrick also does not teach or suggest a method of processing a request that an item be repaired or replaced that comprises: receiving the request at a central claim processing facility; determining whether the item requires replacement or repair due to (1) an event covered under a service contract provided by a first provider, or (2) an event covered under an insurance policy provided by a second provider; in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to an event under the service contract, submitting a request to the first provider to process the item according to the service contract; and in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to loss under the insurance policy, submitting a request to the second provider to process the item according to the insurance policy, as required by Claim 10. Therefore, Claim 10 is patentable over *Kirkpatrick*. Claims 11-16 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *Kirkpatrick*.

Kirkpatrick also does not teach or suggest a property protection program that comprises first property coverage that is paid for by a first entity and second property coverage that is paid for by a second entity, as required by Claim 17. Therefore, Claim 17 is patentable over *Kirkpatrick*. Claims 18-30 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from *Kirkpatrick*.

McGill News, Alumni Quarterly, “At Your Service”, Spring 1999

The *McGill News, Alumni Quarterly* publication (hereinafter “*McGill*”) teaches the concept of offering extended warranty insurance on purchases made using premium credit cards. (“At Your Service,” *McGill Affinity VISA Card*, *available at* <http://www.news-archive.mcgill.ca/sp99/service.htm>).

However, the *McGill* publication does not teach or suggest a method of providing insurance to a customer that comprises the steps of: selling a service contract to the customer, the service contract providing protection against the mechanical breakdown or other failure of an item, and in response to the customer purchasing the service contract, providing, at no cost to the customer, insurance coverage that protects the customer against damage or other loss to the item, as required by Claim 1 of the present application. Therefore, Claim 1 is patentable over the *McGill* publication. Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *McGill* publication.

The *McGill* publication also does not teach or suggest a method of processing a request that an item be repaired or replaced that comprises: receiving the request at a central claim processing facility; determining whether the item requires replacement or repair due to (1) an event covered under a service contract provided by a first provider, or (2) an event covered under an insurance policy provided by a second provider; in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to an event under the service contract, submitting a request to the first provider to process the item according to the service contract; and in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to loss under the insurance policy, submitting a request to the

second provider to process the item according to the insurance policy, as required by Claim 10. Therefore, Claim 10 is patentable over the *McGill* publication. Claims 11-16 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *McGill* publication.

The *McGill* publication also does not teach or suggest a property protection program that comprises first property coverage that is paid for by a first entity and second property coverage that is paid for by a second entity, as required by Claim 17. Therefore, Claim 17 is patentable over the *McGill* publication. Claims 18-30 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *McGill* publication.

Freebie-of-the-Day Publication, May 10, 2000

The *Freebie-of-the-Day* (hereinafter, “the *Freebie* publication”) website summarizes the web-based services of Consumer Spot, an online service that offers free extended warranties on any electronics, computer purchases, or home appliances. (*Available at* <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/MAY.HTM>). The warranties are in addition to any manufacturer warranties that already come with any particular purchased product. The service allows a customer to purchase products in stores and register the products via the web site to receive the free warranties. The warranties include a double warranty (doubling the length of the original warranty), extended return, and replacement insurance.

However, the *Freebie* publication does not teach or suggest a method of providing insurance to a customer that comprises the steps of: selling a service contract to the customer, the service contract providing protection against the mechanical breakdown or

other failure of an item, and in response to the customer purchasing the service contract, providing, at no cost to the customer, insurance coverage that protects the customer against damage or other loss to the item, as required by Claim 1 of the present application. Therefore, Claim 1 is patentable over the *Freebie* publication. Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *Freebie* publication.

The *Freebie* publication also does not teach or suggest a method of processing a request that an item be repaired or replaced that comprises: receiving the request at a central claim processing facility; determining whether the item requires replacement or repair due to (1) an event covered under a service contract provided by a first provider, or (2) an event covered under an insurance policy provided by a second provider; in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to an event under the service contract, submitting a request to the first provider to process the item according to the service contract; and in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to loss under the insurance policy, submitting a request to the second provider to process the item according to the insurance policy, as required by Claim 10. Therefore, Claim 10 is patentable over the *Freebie* publication. Claims 11-16 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *Freebie* publication.

The *Freebie* publication also does not teach or suggest a property protection program that comprises first property coverage that is paid for by a first entity and second property coverage that is paid for by a second entity, as required by Claim 17. Therefore, Claim 17 is patentable over the *Freebie* publication. Claims 18-30 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *Freebie* publication.

HP (#1), Harmony Audio Video, Hi-Tech E Commerce, HP (#2), & American Standard Publications

These Internet publications generally reference free warranties or free extended warranties with the purchase of a specific product. For example, *Harmony Audio Video* provides "Free extended warranties: Most products sold at retail will receive an extension on the manufacturers warranty ... Extended warranties are provided by Harmony Audio Video and are not the responsibility of the manufacturer." (*Available at* http://www.harmonyaudiovideo.com/Sales_Policies/sales_policies.shtml). The *HP (#1)* Offer provides: "Protect your investment with HP's free three-year warranty mail-in offer. With the purchase of any of the printers below, you can extend your warranty coverage simply by mailing in a coupon." (*Available at* <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/feature/-/255067/103-2767046-7775060>). The *Hi-Tech E Commerce* offer provides: "Buying Canon printers from Hi-Tech. You will get one extra year of extended warranty on labour only at no extra charge. The first year will be covered by Canon on parts and labour ... Second year will be covered by Hi-Tech on labour only." (URL no longer available). The *HP (#2)* offer provides a similar free extended warranty with the purchase of qualifying printers. (URL no longer available).

However, none of the aforementioned publications teach or suggest a method of providing insurance to a customer that comprises the steps of: selling a service contract to the customer, the service contract providing protection against the mechanical breakdown or other failure of an item, and in response to the customer purchasing the service contract, providing, at no cost to the customer, insurance coverage that protects the customer against damage or other loss to the item, as required by Claim 1 of the present

application. Therefore, Claim 1 is patentable over these publications. Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from these publications.

The aforementioned publications also do not teach a method of processing a request that an item be repaired or replaced that comprises: receiving the request at a central claim processing facility; determining whether the item requires replacement or repair due to (1) an event covered under a service contract provided by a first provider, or (2) an event covered under an insurance policy provided by a second provider; in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to an event under the service contract, submitting a request to the first provider to process the item according to the service contract; and in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to loss under the insurance policy, submitting a request to the second provider to process the item according to the insurance policy, as required by Claim 10. Therefore, Claim 10 is patentable over these publications. Claims 11-16 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from these publications.

The publications listed above also do not teach or suggest a property protection program that comprises first property coverage that is paid for by a first entity and second property coverage that is paid for by a second entity, as required by Claim 17. Therefore, Claim 17 is patentable over the *HP (#1)*, *Harmony Audio Video*, *Hi-Tech E Commerce*, *HP (#2)*, and *American Standard* publications. Claims 18-30 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from these publications.

Barclaycard Publication

The Barclaycard publication (URL no longer available) discloses a process by which a customer can “Purchase almost any household appliance in the UK for £50 or more with Barclaycard (or Barclaycard cheque) and [the customer] can register them for 12 months FREE Barclaycard Extended Warranty – over and above the manufacturer’s warranty.” The “appliance registrations are subject to acceptance criteria.” A customer can also extend the free coverage period on certain appliances to protect purchases for longer for “a highly competitive price.”

However, the *Barclaycard* publication does not teach or suggest a method of providing insurance to a customer that comprises the steps of: selling a service contract to the customer, the service contract providing protection against the mechanical breakdown or other failure of an item, and in response to the customer purchasing the service contract, providing, at no cost to the customer, insurance coverage that protects the customer against damage or other loss to the item, as required by Claim 1 of the present application. Therefore, Claim 1 is patentable over the *Barclaycard* publication. Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *Barclaycard* publication.

The *Barclaycard* publication also does not teach or suggest a method of processing a request that an item be repaired or replaced that comprises: receiving the request at a central claim processing facility; determining whether the item requires replacement or repair due to (1) an event covered under a service contract provided by a first provider, or (2) an event covered under an insurance policy provided by a second

provider; in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to an event under the service contract, submitting a request to the first provider to process the item according to the service contract; and in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to loss under the insurance policy, submitting a request to the second provider to process the item according to the insurance policy, as required by Claim 10. Therefore, Claim 10 is patentable over the *Barclaycard* publication. Claims 11-16 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *Barclaycard* publication.

The *Barclaycard* publication also does not teach or suggest a property protection program that comprises first property coverage that is paid for by a first entity and second property coverage that is paid for by a second entity, as required by Claim 17. Therefore, Claim 17 is patentable over the *Barclaycard* publication. Claims 18-30 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *Barclaycard* publication.

Care Four (UK) Ltd Publication

The *Care Four* Publication discloses extended warranty coverage on new products less than 28 days old and offers a “low cost” alternative to other “high street retail warranties.” The product is intended “primarily for sale by approved agents and retailers.”

However, the *Care Four* publication does not teach or suggest a method of providing insurance to a customer that comprises the steps of: selling a service contract to the customer, the service contract providing protection against the mechanical breakdown

or other failure of an item, and in response to the customer purchasing the service contract, providing, at no cost to the customer, insurance coverage that protects the customer against damage or other loss to the item, as required by Claim 1 of the present application. Therefore, Claim 1 is patentable over the *Care Four* publication. Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *Care Four* publication.

The *Care Four* publication also does not teach or suggest a method of processing a request that an item be repaired or replaced that comprises: receiving the request at a central claim processing facility; determining whether the item requires replacement or repair due to (1) an event covered under a service contract provided by a first provider, or (2) an event covered under an insurance policy provided by a second provider; in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to an event under the service contract, submitting a request to the first provider to process the item according to the service contract; and in response to determining that the item requires replacement or repair due to loss under the insurance policy, submitting a request to the second provider to process the item according to the insurance policy, as required by Claim 10. Therefore, Claim 10 is patentable over the *Care Four* publication. Claims 11-16 depend from Claim 1 and thus are also distinguishable from the *Care Four* publication.

The *Care Four* publication also does not teach or suggest a property protection program that comprises first property coverage that is paid for by a first entity and second property coverage that is paid for by a second entity, as required by Claim 17. Therefore,



US006519470B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Rydbeck

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 6,519,470 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Feb. 11, 2003**

(54) **AUTOMATED WARRANTY REGISTRATION**

(75) **Inventor:** **Nils R. C. Rydbeck, Cary, NC (US)**

(73) **Assignee:** **Ericsson Inc., Research Triangle Park, NC (US)**

(*) **Notice:** Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) **Appl. No.:** **09/528,674**

(22) **Filed:** **Mar. 20, 2000**

Related U.S. Application Data

(62) Division of application No. 08/991,907, filed on Dec. 16, 1997, now Pat. No. 6,163,693.

(51) **Int. Cl.⁷** **H04Q 7/20; H04Q 7/36; H04Q 7/32**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **455/466; 455/414; 455/418; 455/419; 455/420; 455/550**

(58) **Field of Search** **455/414, 418, 455/419, 420, 550, 517, 435, 411, 432, 422, 575, 90, 412, 558, 403, 67.1, 424, 425**

(56) **References Cited**

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5,276,729 A * 1/1994 Higuchi et al. 455/419

5,894,596 A * 4/1999 Hayes, Jr. 455/418
5,907,600 A * 5/1999 Fuller et al. 455/418
5,974,331 A * 10/1999 Cook et al. 455/414
6,041,229 A * 3/2000 Turner 455/420

* cited by examiner

Primary Examiner—William Trost

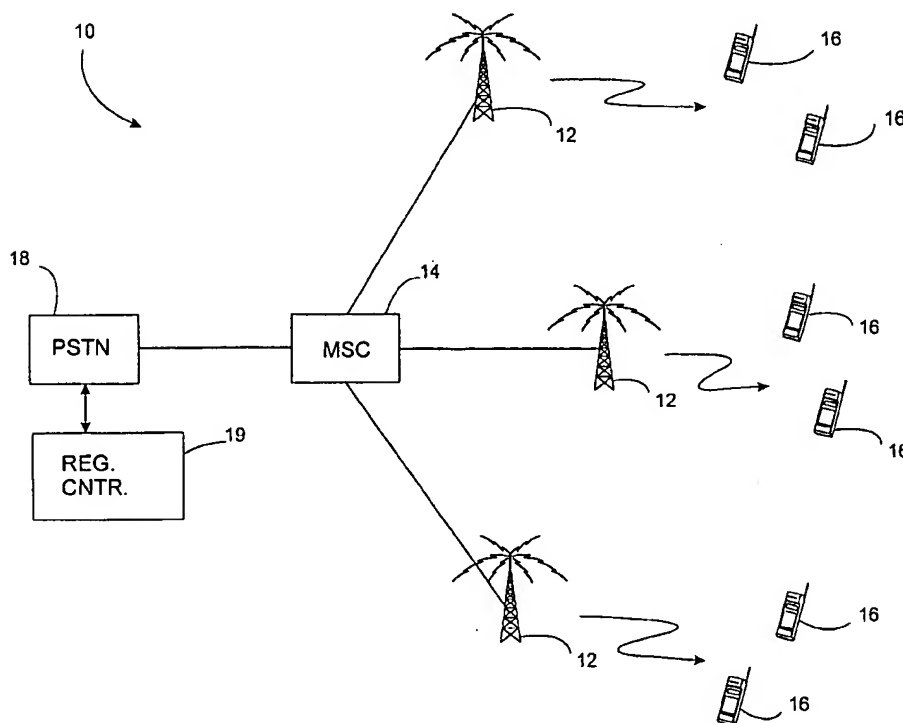
Assistant Examiner—Keith Ferguson

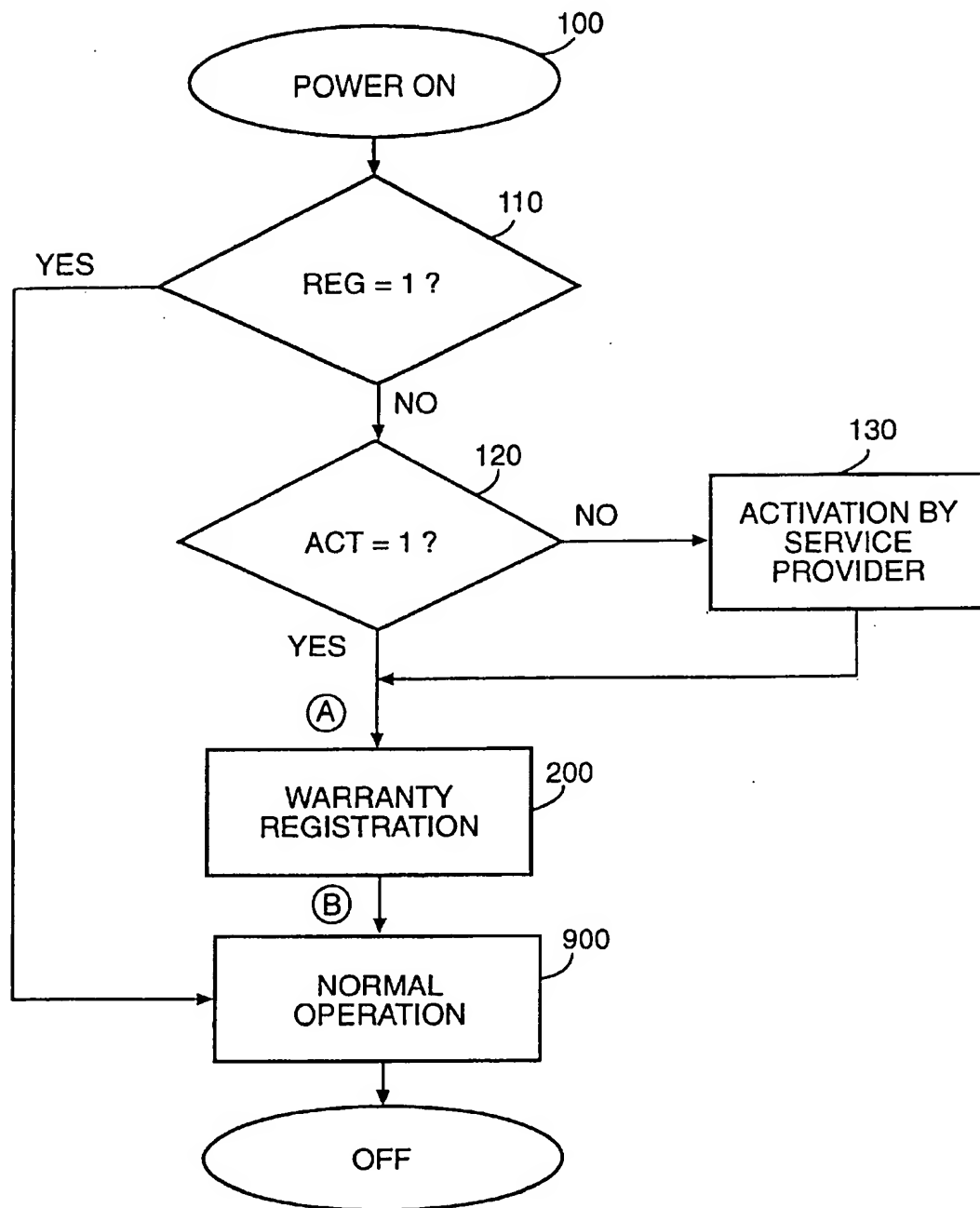
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Coats & Bennett, P.L.L.C.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method for determining when a wireless communications device's warranty period begins uses the wireless communications device's first use date as a proxy for the start of the warranty period. After being powered-on, the wireless communications device checks a non-volatile warranty registration status-flag. If that flag indicates that the wireless communications device has not previously registered, the wireless communications device sends a unique identifier, such as a serial number, to a warranty registration center. The warranty registration center stores the identifier with an associated registration date stamp. The wireless communications device then changes the warranty registration status flag to indicate that the device has been registered for warranty purposes. Once this automated warranty registration is complete, the wireless communications device proceeds with normal operation. The recorded first use date may be used as the start of the warranty period.

15 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



**FIG. 1**

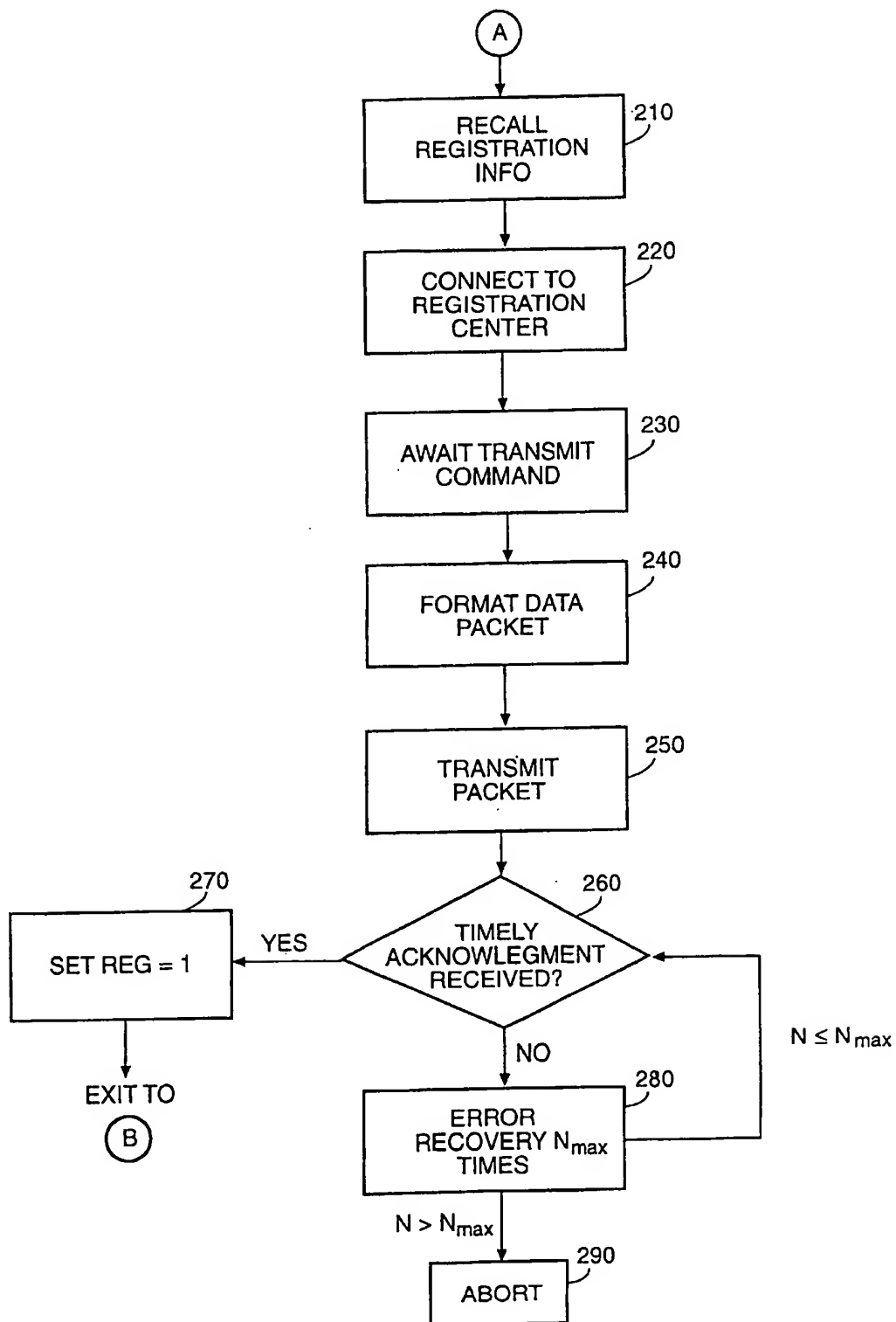
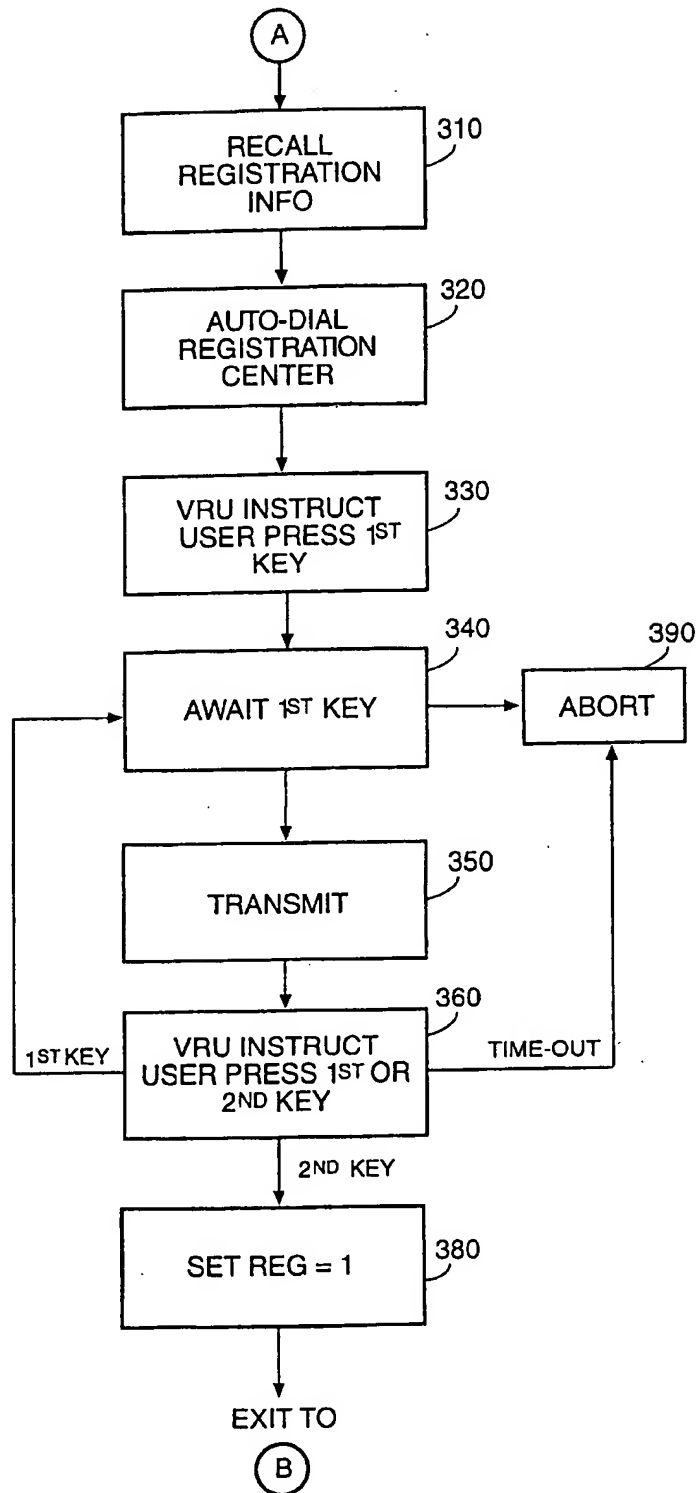
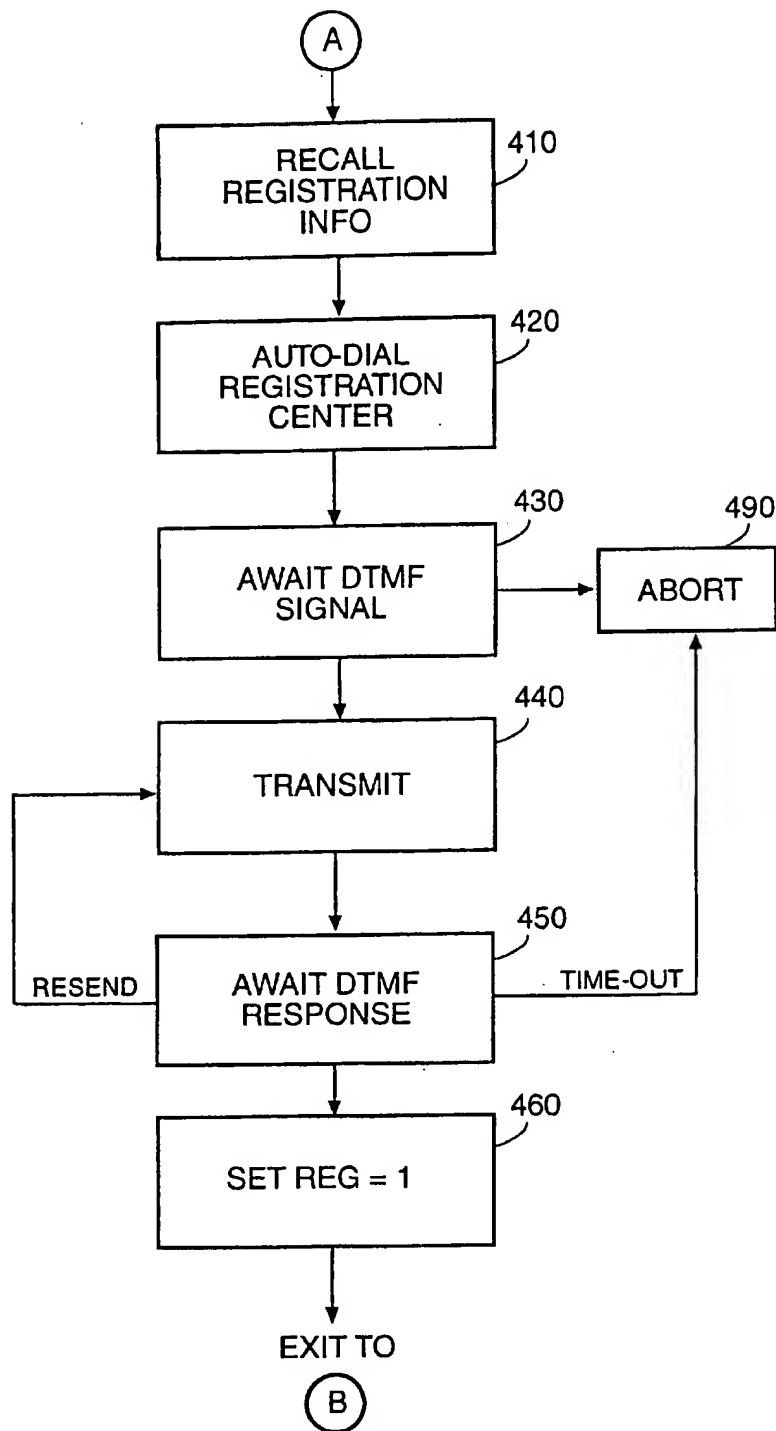
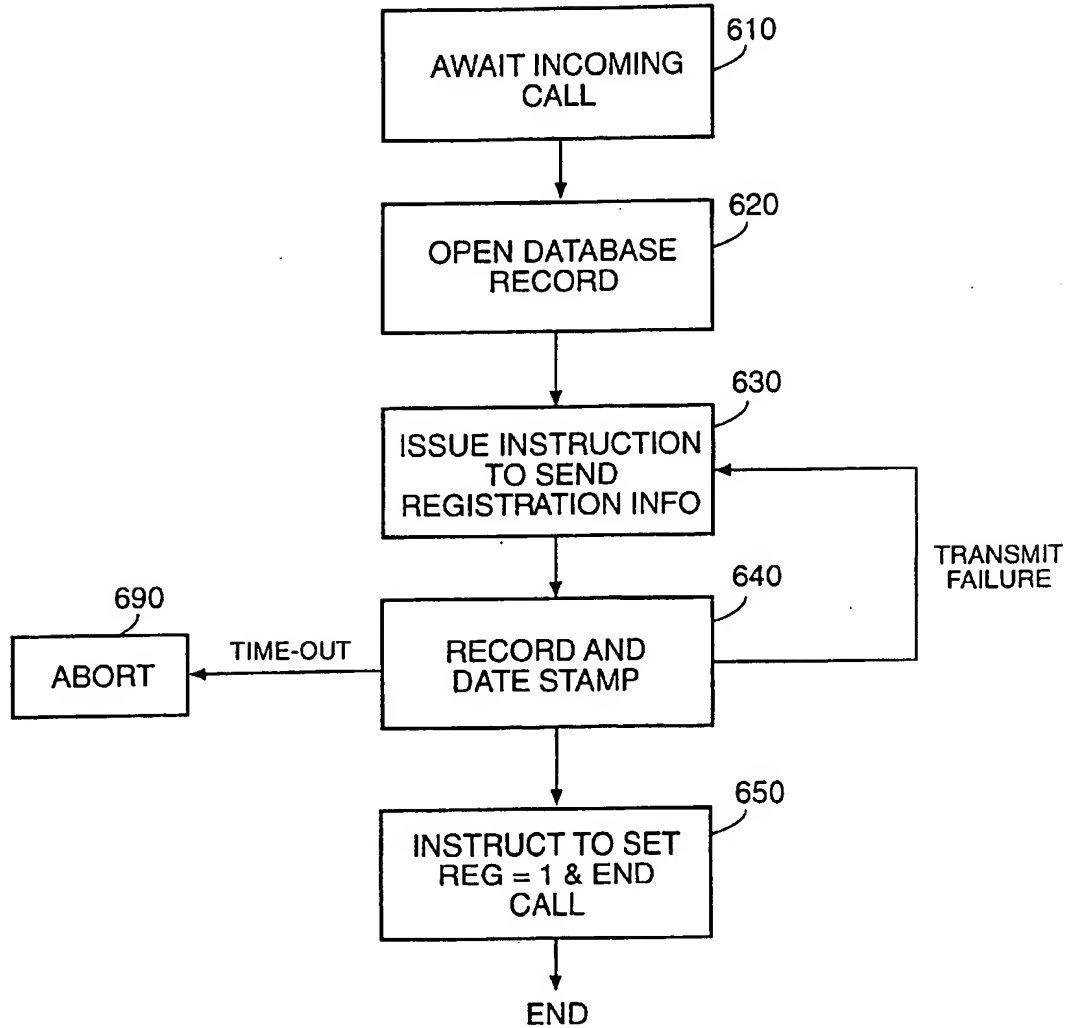


FIG. 2

**FIG. 3**

**FIG. 4**

**FIG. 5**

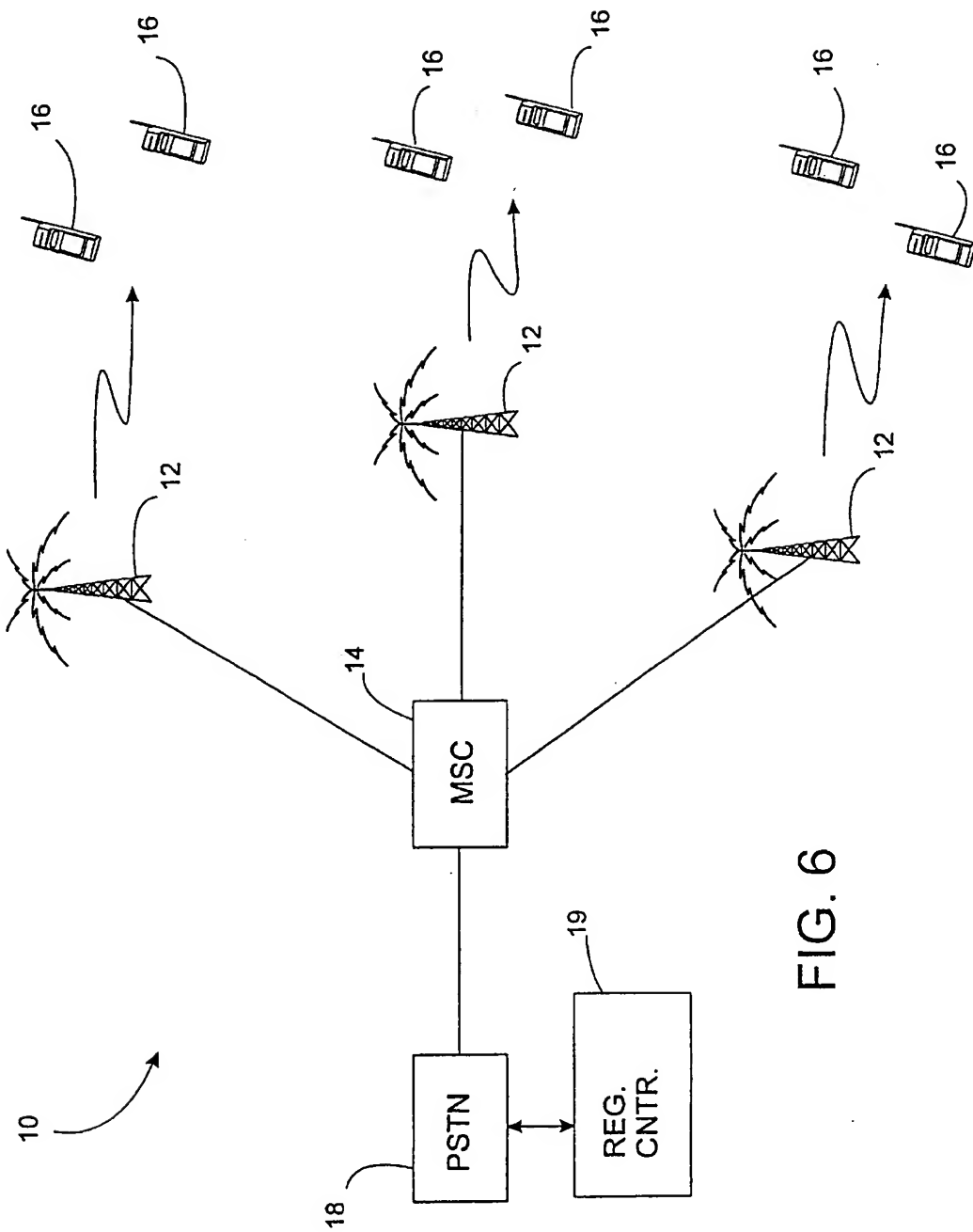


FIG. 6

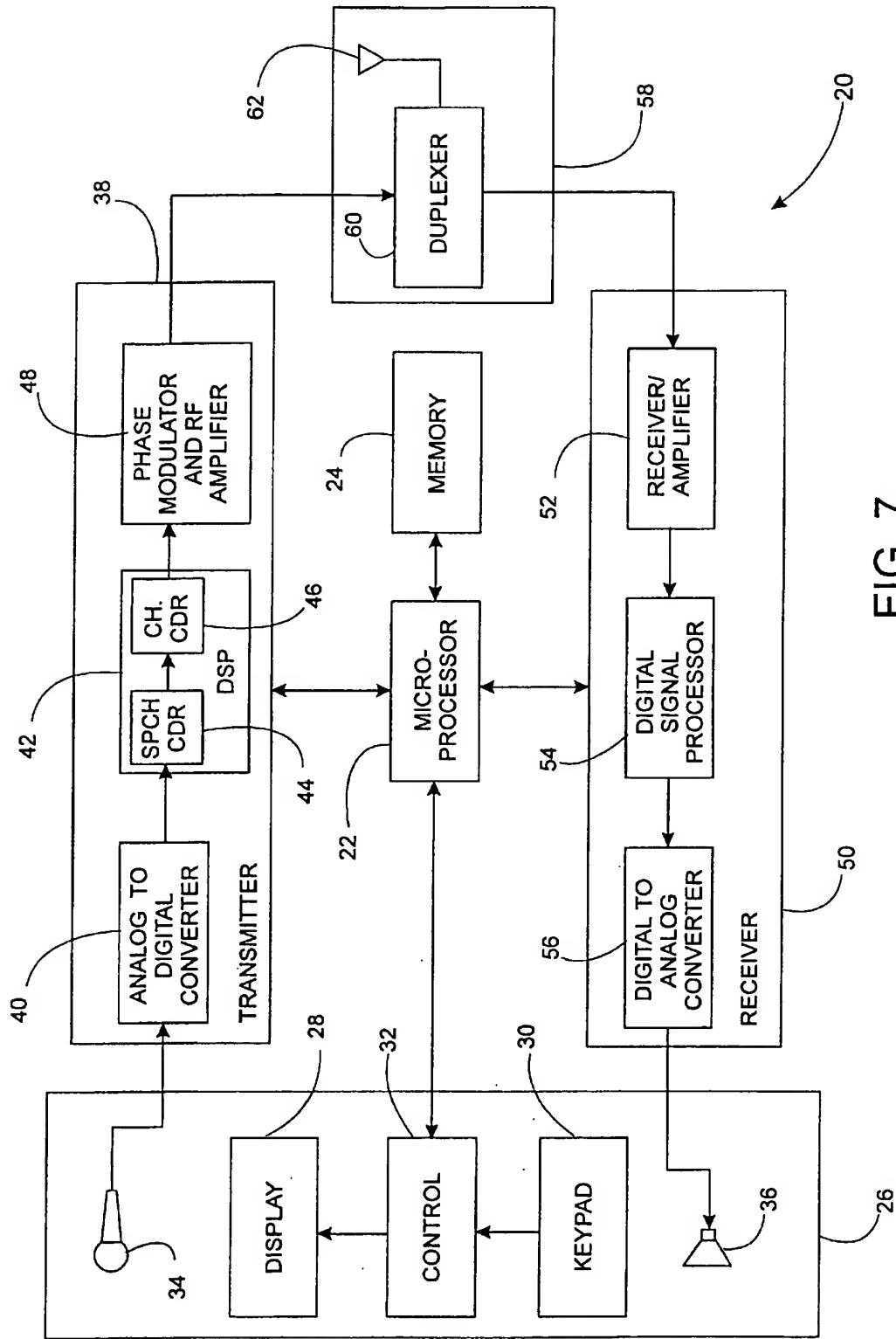


FIG. 7

AUTOMATED WARRANTY REGISTRATION

This is a divisional of application Ser. No. 08/991,907, filed Dec. 16, 1997, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,163,693, which is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to the communications field and, in particular, to automated warranty registration for wireless communications devices.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Wireless communications devices, such as cellular telephones, have become extremely popular with business and personal users. The manufacturers of wireless communications devices typically provide a time-limited warranty with their products. The warranty typically guarantees to purchasers that the manufacturer will repair or replace a defective wireless communications device for free during a set period of time, such as one year from purchase. After the warranty period has expired, any repair costs are the financial responsibility of the wireless communications device owner, not the manufacturer. Because costs of warranty repair and replacement are significant, manufacturers are keenly interested in determining whether the warranty period has expired or not.

Most warranty periods for wireless communications devices begin to run at the time of purchase. Customers usually purchase wireless communications devices from a retail outlet. After purchase, a cellular telephone network service provider activates the telephone to allow the phone to access the service provider's wireless communications system.

Because manufacturers generally do not own or control the retail outlets and service providers, the manufacturer typically loses track of the wireless communications device once the manufacturer ships the device to the retail outlet. As such, manufacturers have difficulty in determining when the wireless communications device is sold to a consumer. Several different methods and systems for tracking when a particular wireless communications device was first sold to a customer have been tried, but with limited success.

One approach is to require the purchaser of the wireless communications device to mail a warranty card to the manufacturer. This approach has met with consumer dissatisfaction and, because consumers are not required to return the warranty card in order to recover under the warranty, many fail to do so. Further, by accident or with fraudulent intent, the consumer may simply record the wrong date on the warranty card.

A second approach is to require the consumer to provide proof-of-purchase documentation such as a sales slip when requesting warranty service. This method, however, puts a considerable burden on the consumer to maintain and locate the sales slip some time after the purchase of the wireless communications device, and is therefore not well received by consumers.

A third approach is for the manufacturer to estimate the wireless communications device's sales date based on the device's known date of manufacture along with the average inventory time for a particular service provider or equipment vendor. This method has the disadvantage of highly dubious accuracy, and therefore frequently induces the manufacturer to err to the consumer's benefit in the spirit of good customer relations by providing warranty service long past the actual date on which the warranty should have expired.

Still another approach is for the wireless communications device to record its own start-of-service date in internal non-volatile memory. The manufacturer then reads this date when examining a wireless communications device returned for warranty service. This method, although clearly an improvement on the earlier methods, nevertheless has two disadvantages: (1) the user or service provider must enter the start-of-service date, or the wireless communications device must contain a calendar so that it has a sense of time and is therefore cognizant of its start-of-service date, and (2) the date held in non-volatile memory may be obliterated in the case of catastrophic failure, and may therefore be unavailable to the manufacturer at the time warranty service is requested.

These and other shortcomings of the prior art suggest that there remains the need for a simple, effective method for determining the warranty period for a wireless communications device.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present method is a simple and effective method for determining when a warranty period for a wireless communications device begins. The wireless communications device's first use date is used as a proxy for the start of the warranty period. After being powered-on, the wireless communications device checks a non-volatile warranty registration status-flag. If that flag indicates that the wireless communications device has not previously registered, the wireless communications device sends a unique identifier, such as a serial number, to a warranty registration center. The warranty registration center stores the identifier with an associated warranty registration date stamp, preferably in a database, and sends a warranty registration acknowledgment back to the wireless communications device. The wireless communications device then changes the warranty registration status flag to indicate that the device has been registered for warranty purposes. Once this automated warranty registration is complete, the wireless communications device proceeds with normal operation. The recorded first use date is used as the start of the warranty period. Once the beginning of the warranty period is established, the expiration status of the warranty may be determined using conventional methods. Because the process is performed prior to normal operation of the wireless communications device, compliance with warranty registration will be more uniform. Further, because the process is automatic, it will impose little or no burden on the user and therefore consumer dissatisfaction may be avoided.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a simplified flow diagram of the overall operation of a wireless communications device in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a simplified flow diagram of one embodiment of the registration process of box 200 of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a simplified flow diagram of another embodiment of the registration process of box 200 of FIG. 1 for wireless communications devices that do not have packet or other data-communications capabilities.

FIG. 4 is a simplified flow diagram of another embodiment of the registration process of box 200 of FIG. 1 for wireless communications devices that have a tone detector.

FIG. 5 is a simplified flow diagram of the operation of the registration center in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 6 is a simplified representation of a cellular telephone wireless communications system.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a typical mobile unit of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present method uses the wireless communications device's first use date as a proxy for the start of the warranty period. After being powered-on, the wireless communications device checks two non-volatile status-flags; and if the wireless communications device has not done so already, the wireless communications device contacts the manufacturer so that the manufacturer can record the first use date. This first use date is used as the start of the warranty period.

For clarity, the present discussion will assume that the wireless communications device is a cellular telephone. However, it is to be understood that other wireless communications devices, such as personal communications assistants, pagers, and the like are also within the scope of the present invention.

Four different entities are typically involved with the sale and activation of a cellular telephone. The first is the manufacturer of the phone; the second is the retail outlet where the phone is sold; the third is the phone purchaser or user; and the fourth is the telecommunications service provider. Typically, these four entities are all separate, but in some instances the service provider may also serve as a retail outlet for phone sales.

As is well known in the art, when a phone is sold, it is not ready for use until the service provider "activates" the phone. During the activation process, the phone is provided with essential operating information which it stores in non-volatile memory. Once the phone is activated, the phone can access the service provider's telecommunications network.

Wireless communications systems, such as cellular telephone systems, may typically be divided into two broad classifications based on their method of operation: analog and digital. Analog systems transmit communications signals in an analog manner; an example of an analog system available in the United States is Advanced Mobile Phone System (AMPS). Digital systems transmit communications signals in a digital manner; an example of a digital system available in Europe is Groupe Speciale Mobile (GSM). In the United States, many wireless communications systems include mobile phones that are dual-mode, that is, the phones are able to operate in both analog and digital systems. An example of dual-mode phones are those compatible with Telecommunications Industry Association Interim Standard IS-136.

Under the prior art, unless the manufacturer also acts as the service provider (very unusual), the manufacturer lost track of the phone after the phone leaves the manufacturer's warehouse. That is, unless and until the phone was returned to the manufacturer for repair, the manufacturer typically did not know when or where the phone was first used, absent the user voluntarily supplying the information to the manufacturer.

In the present method, after being powered-on, the phone checks a non-volatile status-flag to determine whether it has already registered for warranty purposes with a warranty registration center 19. If not, the phone contacts the warranty registration center 19 so that the first use date can be recorded. The manufacturer can then use this first use date as the start of the warranty period.

The present method will be discussed in three sections. The first section covers the overall action of the phone (FIG. 1). The second section covers the phone's actions in more

detail (FIGS. 2-4). The third section covers the actions of the warranty registration center 19 (FIG. 5).

In order to determine whether a phone has already registered for warranty purposes with the warranty registration center 19, the present method utilizes two status-flags: Warranty Registration (REG) and Activation (ACT). REG indicates the warranty registration status. ACT indicates whether the phone has been activated by a service provider. Both status-flags are stored in non-volatile memory internal to the phone. The non-volatile memory further includes an identifier (e.g., a serial number) and routing information for contacting a warranty registration center 19 in addition to the two status-flags. Of course, the non-volatile memory may also include other information. When the phone leaves the manufacturer, both status-flags are set to zero (false).

Referring now to FIG. 1, when the phone is powered-on (box 100), the phone checks flag REG to determine whether the phone has previously registered itself with the manufacturer for warranty purposes (box 110). If REG=1, indicating that the phone has previously registered, the phone proceeds with normal operation (box 900), that normal operation being well known in the art. If REG=0, then the phone checks flag ACT (box 120). If ACT=0, the phone must be initialized, also known as activated, by a service provider (box 130) in a manner well known in the art. If ACT=1 then the phone proceeds to register with the warranty registration center 19 (box 200) as described below. After successful warranty registration, the phone proceeds with normal operation (box 900). It should be noted that as part of a successful warranty registration procedure, status-flag REG will be set to 1.

To illustrate the process, assume a newly purchased phone is powered-on (box 100). At this point, both REG and ACT are set to 0, this being the settings supplied by the manufacturer. The phone will automatically check status-flag REG (box 110). Because REG is set to 0, the value of ACT will be checked (box 120). Because ACT is set to 0, the phone must be activated by a service provider (box 130). If the phone is powered-off at this point, no changes are made to flags REG and ACT, and the process repeats the next time the phone is powered-on (box 100). Now assume that the phone is properly activated by a service provider (box 130). At or near the end of the activation process, flag ACT is set to 1 to indicate that the phone has been activated. After activation, the phone proceeds to register with the warranty registration center 19 (box 200) to note the beginning of the warranty period. At or near the end of the process of box 200, flag REG is set to 1 to indicate that the phone has been registered. After warranty registration, the phone proceeds with normal operation (box 900). It should be noted that the phone will preferably use the service provider's communications network to contact the manufacturer; thus, it is desirable for the phone to be properly activated (box 130) before the phone attempts to contact the manufacturer for warranty registration (box 200).

If the process is interrupted after initialization (box 130) but before warranty registration is complete (point B), REG will remain set to 0, but ACT will be 1. In this case, at the next power-on (box 100), the phone will again attempt to register with the warranty registration center 19 (box 200) to note the beginning of the warranty period before proceeding with normal operation (box 900).

Once status-flag REG is set to 1, the phone will no longer attempt to contact the warranty registration center 19 for warranty registration purposes. Accordingly, when a user changes service provider, as is common practice, the phone

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will not attempt to re-register with the warranty registration center 19. Of course, the phone will still need to be activated by the "new" service provider using any commonly known method. Thus, unless the REG status-flag is reset to 0 during authorized repair, such as repair by or on behalf of the manufacturer, it is intended that status-flag REG will remain set to 1 for the remainder of the phone's life.

Referring now to FIG. 2, one embodiment of the process of box 200 is further explained. The algorithm shown in FIG. 2 is entered from point A in FIG. 1, and if successful returns to point B in FIG. 1. First, the phone recalls warranty registration information loaded by the manufacturer, preferably at the time of manufacture, from the phone's non-volatile memory (box 210). Warranty registration information includes an identifier unique to the phone, such as a serial number, and routing information for contacting the manufacturer. Examples of such routing information include a toll-free phone number, a Short Message Service (SMS) number, an internet access number, an e-mail address, and a web page address.

Next, the phone connects to the warranty registration center 19 (box 220). The phone then waits for a transmit command from the warranty registration center 19 (box 230). Once the command is received, a data packet which includes the phone's identifier is constructed (box 240) according to requirements of the chosen data-communications format and protocol description. In one preferred embodiment, the chosen data-communications format and protocol description are according to IS-136 R-data teleservices. For explanation of IS-136 R-data teleservices, see Chapter 7, Section 1, of Telecommunications Industry Association Interim Standard IS-136.1, revision A. The data packet includes routing information for directing the data packet to the warranty registration center 19 and payload information including the phone's unique identifier. The assembled packet is passed to the phone's physical layer for transmission to its destination (box 250).

The phone then waits for an acknowledgment (box 260) from the warranty registration center 19 indicating that the data packet has been successfully received and processed. If no such acknowledgment is timely forthcoming, the phone invokes its error-recovery mechanism (box 280) for pre-set number of re-transmissions of the packet, N_{max} . If none of these re-transmissions is successful, the procedure aborts (box 290). If a timely acknowledgment is received, status-flag REG is set to 1 (box 260), indicating that the warranty registration with the warranty registration center 19 has been successful, and the process returns to FIG. 1 at Point B. Other embodiments of the present invention may employ other known error detection/correction methods native to the data-communications protocol being employed. It should be noted that other communications formats and protocols for data transmission, for example GSM, PCS, and IS-95, may be used equivalently and are encompassed hereby.

In another embodiment, the process described above is altered by deleting the wait for transmit command (box 230). For example, using SMS service, the phone may transmit the registration information as part of a datagram without waiting for a transmit command from the warranty registration center 19. Thereafter, the warranty registration center 19 may initiate a SMS response datagram to acknowledge that the data packet has been successfully received and processed (box 260).

An alternative embodiment of the process of box 200 shown in FIG. 3 may be used for phones that do not have packet or other data-communications capabilities, such as

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those operating in many analog wireless communications systems. The algorithm of FIG. 3 is entered from point A of FIG. 1, and returns if successful to point B of FIG. 1. In this embodiment, the phone recalls the aforementioned warranty registration information loaded by the manufacturer from the phone's non-volatile memory (box 310). Thereafter, using the routing information, the phone automatically establishes a connection with the warranty registration center 19 (box 320). This connection is preferably a voice connection via a toll-free phone number. Once the connection is established, a voice-response unit (VRU) at the warranty registration center 19 instructs the user to depress a first particular keyboard character (box 330), such as star (*). The depression of this key is noted by electronic logic within the phone (box 340), and is interpreted as permission to proceed. The phone's unique identifier is then transmitted automatically by the phone to the warranty registration center 19 (box 350). To accomplish this, the phone preferably uses its native Dual-Tone Multi-Frequency (DTMF) generator to generate and transmit the standard DTMF tone-pair corresponding to each of the digits of the identifier, along with appropriate error coding.

If the warranty registration center 19 does not successfully receive the message (as indicated, for example, by time-out, parity error, or the wrong number of received digits), the warranty registration center's VRU instructs the user to enter the first particular keyboard character again (box 360). As shown in FIG. 3, this results in a re-transmission of the identifier.

Upon successful reception of the message by the warranty registration center 19, the warranty registration center's VRU instructs the user to enter a second particular keyboard character (box 360), such as the pound sign (#). When logic within the phone detects this entry, status-flag REG is set to 1 (box 380), denoting successful warranty registration, the call is terminated, and the process returns to FIG. 1 at Point B.

As indicated by FIG. 3, if the phone encounters a time-out situation while waiting for the user to press a key (box 330) or the VRU to respond (box 360), the phone aborts the registration procedure (box 390).

Another alternative embodiment shown in FIG. 4 is used for phones operating in analog systems when the phone is equipped with a DTMF detector, or other tone detector. The warranty registration center 19 guides the phone through the steps of FIG. 4 by sending DTMF tones—rather than VRU audio messages—from the warranty registration center 19 to the phone.

The algorithm of FIG. 4 is entered from point A of FIG. 1, and returns if successful to point B of FIG. 1. In this embodiment, the phone recalls the aforementioned warranty registration information loaded by the manufacturer from the phone's non-volatile memory (box 410). Thereafter, using the routing information, the phone automatically establishes a connection with the warranty registration center 19 (box 420). Once the connection is established, the phone waits for a DTMF signal from the warranty registration center 19 (box 430). Once the DTMF signal is received, the phone's identifier is then transmitted automatically by the phone to the warranty registration center 19 (box 440). As with the procedure of FIG. 3, the phone uses its native DTMF generator to generate and transmit the standard DTMF tone-pair corresponding to each of the digits of the identifier, along with appropriate error coding. The phone then waits for a DTMF signal from the warranty registration center 19 (box 450), indicating successful warranty registration.

If the warranty registration center 19 does not successfully receive the message, the warranty registration center 19 requests a re-transmission of the identifier (box 440). If the warranty registration center 19 successfully receives the message, the warranty registration center 19 instructs the phone to set the REG status-flag to 1 (box 460) denoting successful registration, the call is terminated, and the process returns to FIG. 1 at point B.

As indicated by FIG. 4, if the phone encounters a time-out situation while waiting for a DTMF signal from the warranty registration center 19 (box 430 or box 450), the phone aborts the registration procedure (box 490).

With respect to the method of FIG. 3, the method of FIG. 4 has the advantage of transparency to the user, but the disadvantage of added complexity in that the phone requires a tone detector such as a DTMF detector.

In one preferred embodiment, with respect to FIGS. 2-4, normal operation of the phone is allowed after an abort (box 290, box 390, or box 490), so as to minimize user dissatisfaction if the warranty registration center 19 is temporarily dysfunctional or the like. Alternatively, after an abort (box 290, box 390, or box 490), the phone may allow a fixed number of power-ups to normal operation to occur before requiring a successful warranty registration.

Turning now to FIG. 5, the actions at the warranty registration center 19 are shown. Preferably, the warranty registration center 19 includes a computer that is date aware and a database for storing identifier-date registration information. The warranty registration center 19 first waits for an incoming call or equivalent, such as the arrival of a packet data message (box 610). When the call is received, a database record is opened (box 620). The warranty registration center 19 then instructs the phone to begin sending the warranty registration information (box 630). As described above, this instruction may be done automatically or may be achieved through a VRU. Alternatively, the process of box 630 may be omitted, such as when the contact with the warranty registration center 19 is via a packet data message. The heart of this process is the recording of the phone's unique identifier (e.g., serial number) with an accompanying date stamp at the warranty registration center 19 (box 640). Once the identifier is recorded, the database record is closed and the phone is instructed to set status-flag REG to 1 (box 650). Robustness may be built into the process by having the warranty registration center 19 re-request the warranty registration information (box 630) in the event of a transmission failure such as parity or time-out failure. Further, the process may abort (box 690) after a set number of failures.

It should be noted that if the database record opened has an indicator that matches an existing record, meaning that the phone has already been registered, the new data is preferably disregarded and the existing database record is not changed. To avoid problems with repaired phones, when the manufacturer wishes to restart the warranty period, the manufacturer will either clear the appropriate database record or alter the date stamp accordingly.

The start of the warranty period for a particular phone is determined by looking in the warranty registration center's database at the date stamp associated with the phone's identifier. It is understood that the date stamp reflects the first use date rather than the purchase date. However, it is believed that users typically have cellular phones activated very shortly after purchasing them. As such, it is typical that the purchase date and first activation date will be the same. At most, the indicated start of the warranty period will be only a few days

after the actual purchase date. Once the beginning of the warranty period is established, the expiration status of the warranty may be determined using conventional methods.

The discussion above has assumed that the warranty registration center 19 is operated by the phone's manufacturer. However, the present invention also encompasses situations where warranty registration centers 19 are owned and/or operated by third parties, i.e. parties other than the phone user or the phone manufacturer. Other than the party owning and/or operating the warranty registration center 19, the description given above would apply.

One preferred embodiment of a wireless communications system and mobile telephone suitable for practicing the method described above are shown in FIGS. 6 and 7. Referring to FIG. 6, a wireless communications system, such as a cellular phone system, is indicated generally by the numeral 10 and comprises a plurality of base stations 12 which are connected via a mobile services switching center (MSC) 14 to a terrestrial communications network such as the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) 18. Each base station 12 is located in and provides service to a geographic region referred to as a cell. In general, there is one base station 12 for each cell within a given system 10. Within each cell, there may be a plurality of mobile units 16 that communicate via radio links with the base station 12. Base stations 12 allow the users of the mobile units 16 to communicate with other mobile units 16, or with users connected to the PSTN 18. The MSC 14 routes calls to and from the mobile units 16 through the appropriate base station 12. A warranty registration center 19 communicates with the MSC 14 via the PSTN 18. Alternatively, the warranty registration center 19 may communicate directly with, or be part of, the MSC 14.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a typical mobile unit 16 that uses the automatic warranty registration method of the present invention. The mobile unit 16 shown in FIG. 7 is a fully functional radio transceiver 20 capable of transmitting and receiving digital signals. The transceiver 20 includes a microprocessor 22, an operator interface 26, a transmitter 38, the receiver 50, and an antenna assembly 58.

The operator interface 26 typically includes a display 28, keypad 30, control unit 32, microphone 34, and speaker 36. The display 28 allows the operator to see dialed digits, call status, and other service information. The keypad 30 allows the operator to dial numbers, enter commands, and select options. The control unit 32 interfaces the display 28 and keypad 30 with the microprocessor 22. The microphone 34 receives audio signals from the user and converts the audio signals to analog signals. Speaker 36 converts analog signals from the receiver 50 to audio signals which can be heard by the user.

The analog signals from the microphone 34 are applied to the transmitter 38. The transmitter 38 includes an analog to digital converter 40, a digital signal processor 42, and a phase modulator and RF amplifier 48. The analog to digital converter 40 changes the analog signals from the microphone 34 into a digital signal. The digital signal is passed to the digital signal processor (DSP) 42 which contains a speech coder 44 and channel coder 46. The speech coder 44 compresses the digital signal and the channel coder 46 inserts error detection, error correction and signaling information. The DSP 42 may include, or may work in conjunction with, a DTMF tone generator (not shown). The compressed and encoded signal from the digital signal processor 42 is passed to the phase modulator and RF amplifier 48 which are shown as a combined unit in FIG. 7. The modu-

lator converts the signal to a form which is suitable for transmission on an RF carrier. The RF amplifier then boosts the output of the modulator for transmission via the antenna assembly 58.

The receiver 50 includes a receiver/amplifier 52, digital signal processor 54, and a digital to analog converter 56. Signals received by the antenna assembly 58 are passed to the receiver/amplifier 52 which shifts the frequency spectrum and boosts the low level RF signal to a level appropriate for input to the digital signal processor 54.

The digital signal processor 54 typically includes an equalizer to compensate for phase and amplitude distortions in the channel corrupted signal, a demodulator for extracting bit sequences from the received signal, and a detector for determining transmitted bits based on the extracted sequences. A channel decoder detects and corrects channel errors in the received signal. The channel decoder also includes logic for separating control and signaling data from speech data. Control and signaling data is passed to the microprocessor 22. Speech data is processed by a speech decoder and passed to the digital to analog converter 56. The digital signal processor 54, may include, or may work in conjunction with, a DTMF tone detector (not shown).

The digital to analog converter 56 converts the speech data into an analog signal which is applied to the speaker 36 to generate audible signals which can be heard by the user.

The antenna assembly 58 is connected to the RF amplifier of the transmitter 38 and to the receiver/amplifier 52 of the receiver 50. The antenna assembly 58 typically includes a duplexer 60 and an antenna 62. The duplexer 60 permits full duplex communications over the antenna 62, as may be required for analog or dual-mode operation.

The microprocessor 22 coordinates the operation of the transmitter 38 and the receiver 50. This coordination includes power control, channel selection, timing, as well as a host of other functions. The microprocessor 22 inserts signaling messages into the transmitted signals and extracts signaling messages from the received signals. The microprocessor 22 responds to any base station commands contained in the signaling messages, and implements those commands. When the user enters commands via the keypad 30, the commands are transferred to the microprocessor 22 for action. Memory 24 stores and supplies information at the direction of the microprocessor 22 and preferably includes both volatile and non-volatile portions.

The present invention may, of course, be carried out in other specific ways than those herein set forth without departing from the spirit and the essential characteristics of the invention. The present embodiments are therefore to be construed in all aspects as illustrative and not restrictive and all changes coming within the meaning and equivalency range of the appended claims are intended to be embraced therein.

What is claimed is:

1. A communications device, comprising:
 - a) memory having stored therein:
 - i) a unique identifier for the communications device;
 - ii) a warranty registration status indicator;
 - b) a transmitter in communication with said memory; and
 - c) wherein said transmitter automatically sends a message containing said unique identifier to a warranty registration center to cause a warranty period to start.
2. The communications device of claim 1 further comprising a receiver for receiving an acknowledgment from said warranty registration center indicating that the warranty period associated with the communications device has started.

3. The communications device of claim 2 wherein said warranty registration status indicator is changed in response to receipt of said acknowledgement.

4. The communications device of claim 1 further comprising an antenna coupled to said transmitter, an operator interface, and a logic circuit for controlling the communications device and in communication with said transmitter, said memory, and said operator interface.

5. The communications device of claim 1, wherein the memory further includes routing information and wherein said communications device automatically communicates with said warranty registration center using said routing information immediately after activation of the communications device to send said message to said warranty registration center.

6. The communications device of claim 5, wherein the communications device is a mobile radio and the communication between said device and said warranty registration center is via a wireless communications network.

7. The communications device of claim 1, wherein said warranty registration status indicator is set to a first predetermined value prior to starting the warranty period and to second predetermined value in response to the warranty period being started.

8. The communications device of claim 1, wherein, if the communications device is operating in a digital network:

- a) the communications device is either a digital mobile phone or dual-mode mobile phone; and
- b) said message is formatted and transmitted according to either a short message service or a data communications service.

9. The communications device of claim 1, further including a DTMF generator and wherein:

- a) the communications device is either an analog mobile phone or dual-mode mobile phone operating in an analog mode; and,
- b) said message is formatted and transmitted in DTMF tones.

10. The communications device of claim 9, further comprising a tone detector for interpreting signals from said warranty registration center.

11. A communications device, comprising:

- a) memory having stored therein:
 - i) a unique identifier for the communications device;
 - ii) a warranty registration status indicator;
 - iii) routing information;
- b) a transmitter;
- c) an antenna coupled to said transmitter;
- d) an operator interface;
- e) a logic circuit for controlling the communications device and in communication with said transmitter, said memory, and said operator interface;
- f) wherein said transmitter automatically sends a message containing said unique identifier to a warranty registration center using said routing information to cause a warranty period to start;
- g) a receiver coupled to said antenna for receiving an acknowledgment from said warranty registration center indicating that the warranty period associated with the communications device has started; and
- h) wherein said warranty registration status indicator is set to a first predetermined value prior to starting the warranty period and to second predetermined value in response to said acknowledgement.

12. The communications device of claim 11, wherein the communications device is a mobile radio and wherein the sending of said message is via a wireless communications network.

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13. The communications device of claim 11, wherein, if the communications device is operating in a digital network,;

- a) the communications device is either a digital mobile phone or dual-mode mobile phone; and
- b) said message is formatted and transmitted according to either a short message service or a data communications service.

14. The communications device of claim 11, further including a DTMF generator and wherein:

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a) the communications device is either an analog mobile phone or dual-mode mobile phone operating in an analog mode; and,

b) said message is formatted and transmitted in DTMF tones.

15. The communications device of claim 14, further comprising a tone detector for interpreting signals from said warranty registration center.

* * * * *



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(12) **United States Patent**
LoVasco et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 6,208,853 B1**
(45) Date of Patent: ***Mar. 27, 2001**

(54) **METHODS FOR REGISTERING A WARRANTY FOR A WIRELESS DEVICE**

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(*) **Notice:** This patent issued on a continued prosecution application filed under 37 CFR 1.53(d), and is subject to the twenty year patent term provisions of 35 U.S.C. 154(a)(2).

Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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(58) **Field of Search** **455/405, 406, 455/407, 408, 409, 418, 414, 419, 466, 412, 433, 435, 575, 420, 410**

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Primary Examiner—William G. Trost

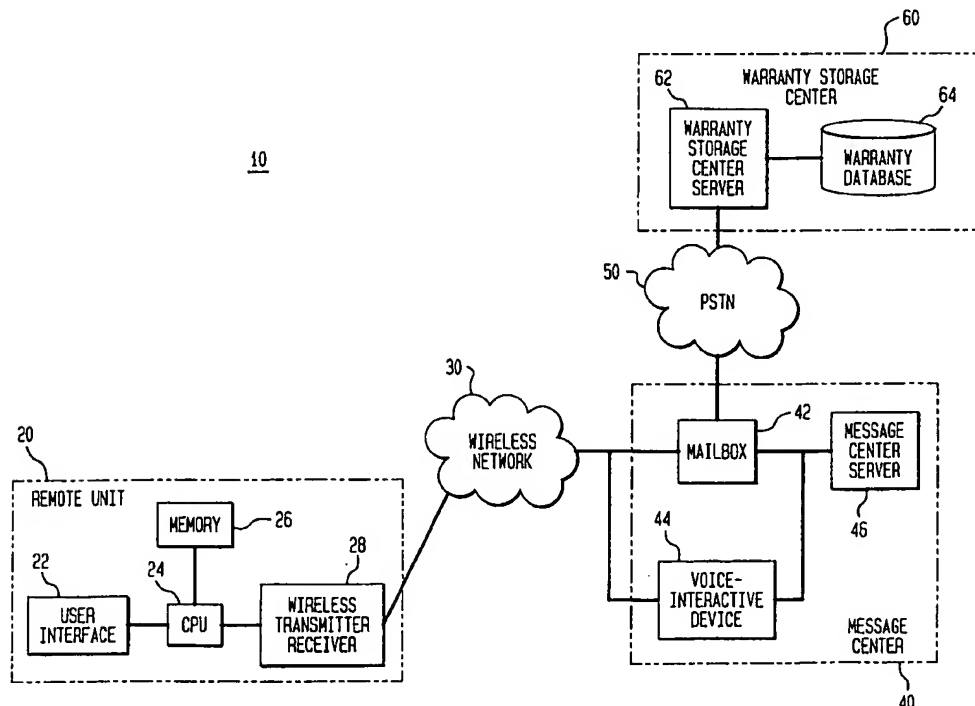
Assistant Examiner—Joy K. Redmon

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A warranty registration method for a wireless remote unit in a communication network is provided wherein the communication network includes a wireless network and a message center. Initial activation of a wireless remote unit prompts retrieval of warranty information specific to the wireless remote unit. A message is constructed based on the warranty information and subsequently transmitted to the message center. The message center receives the warranty information and transfers it to a warranty center.

21 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



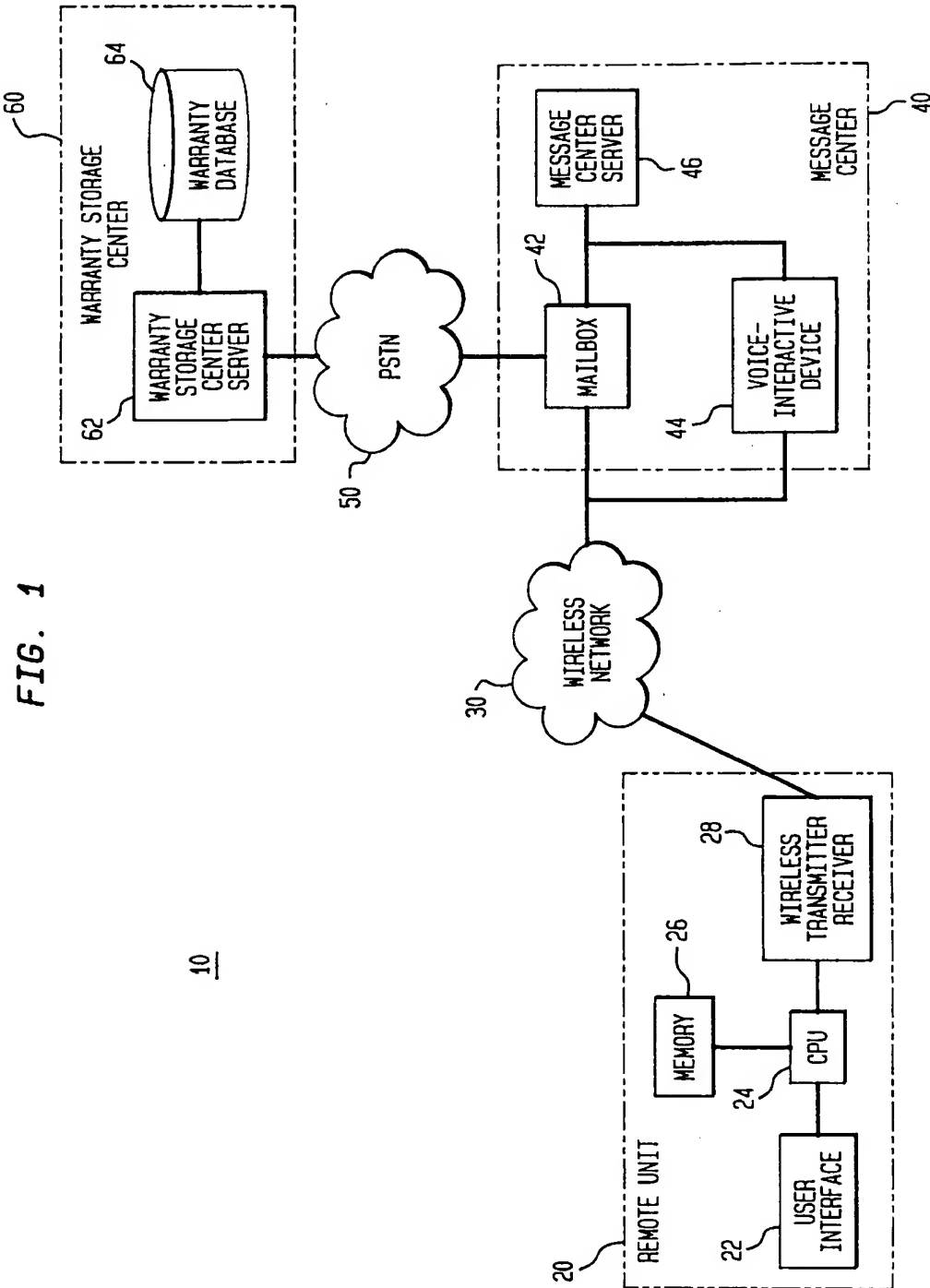


FIG. 2A

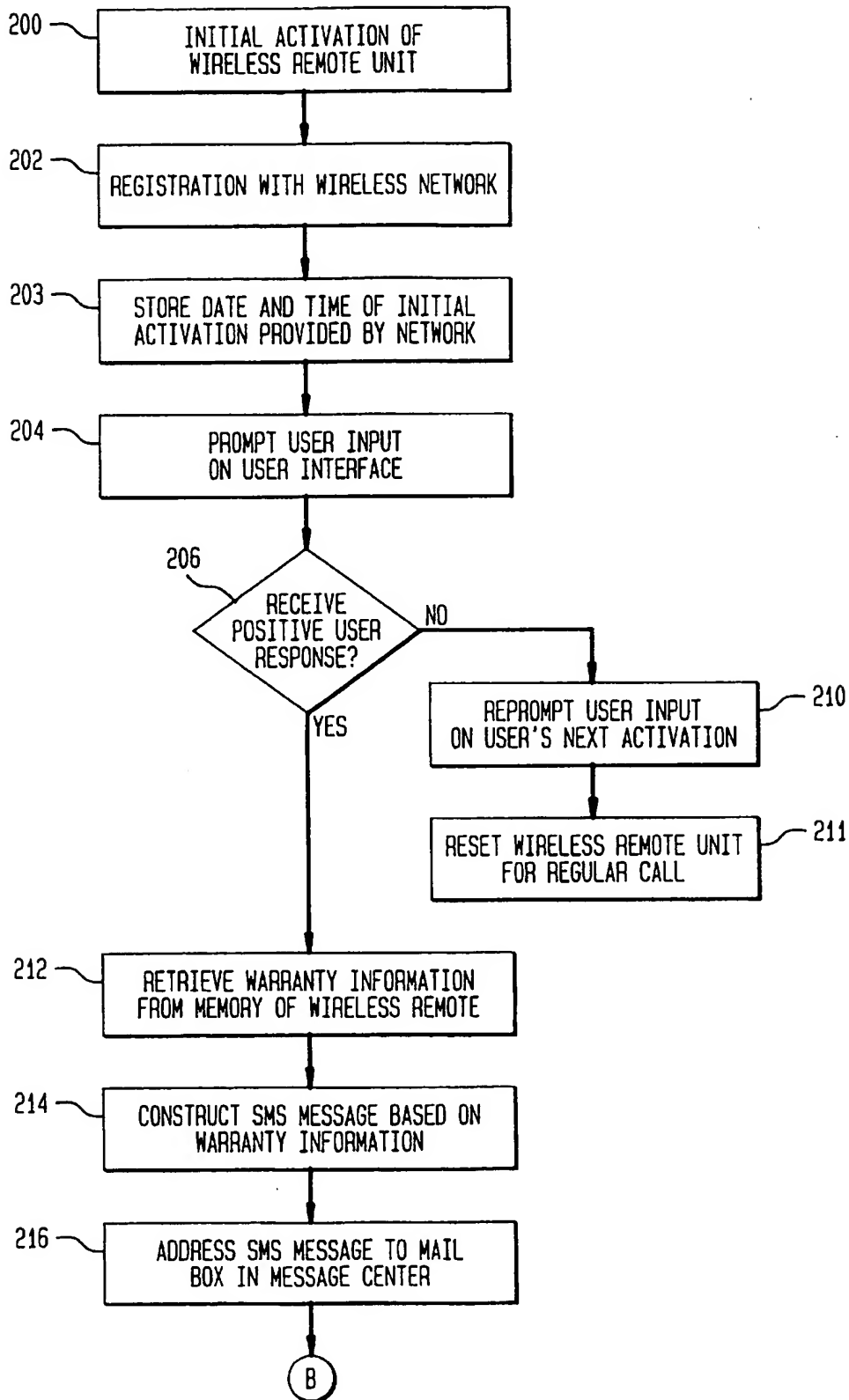


FIG. 2B

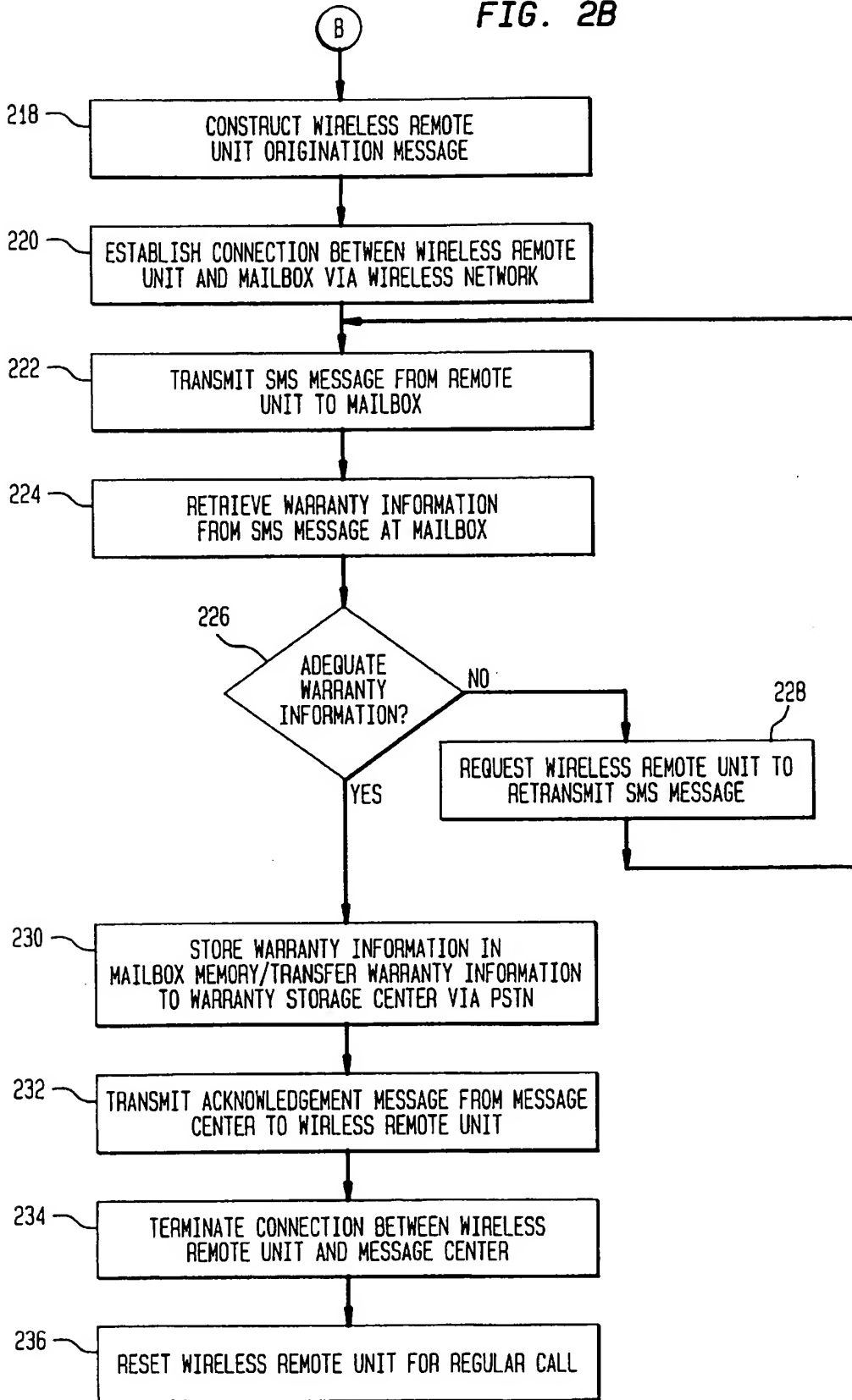


FIG. 3A

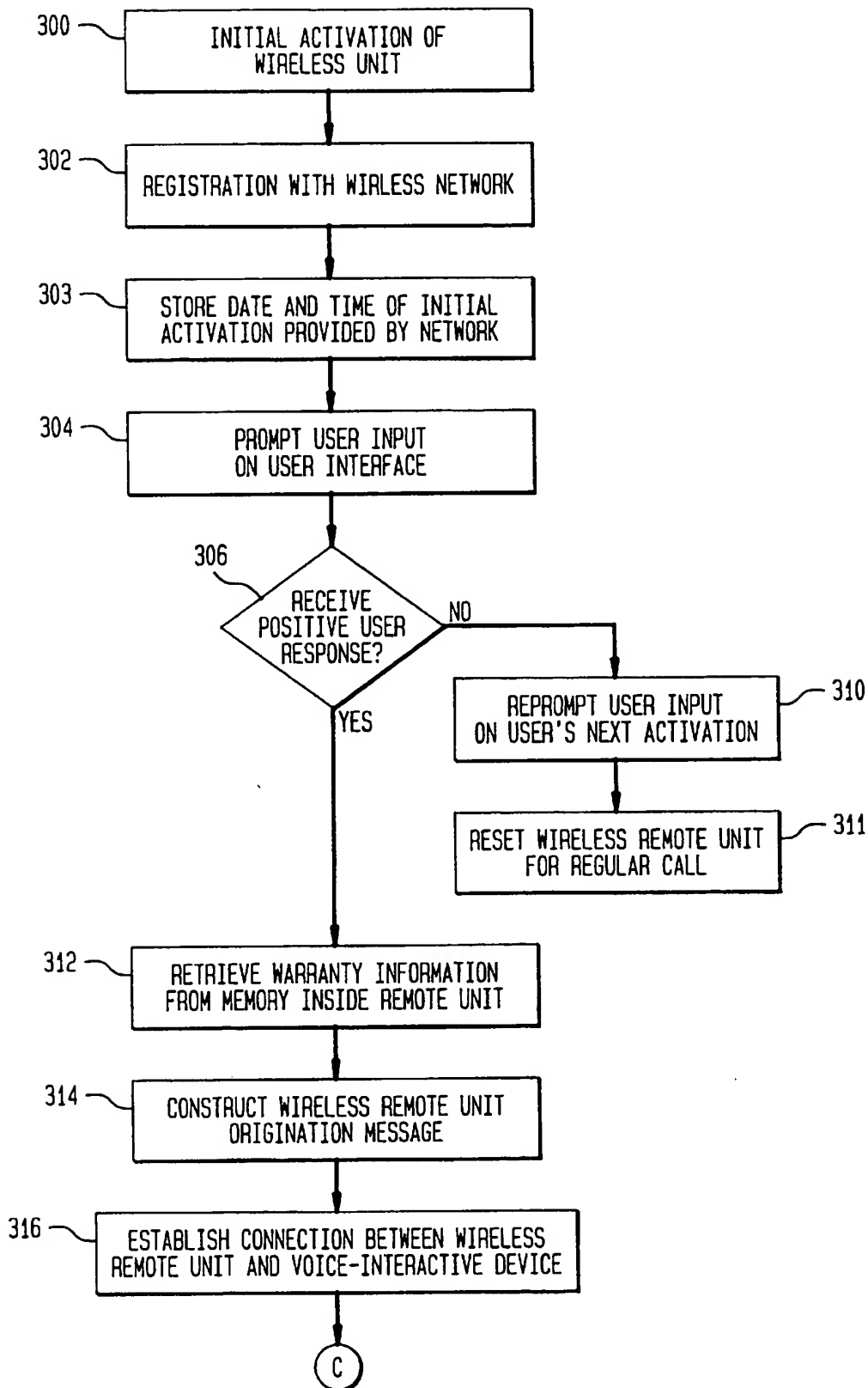


FIG. 3B

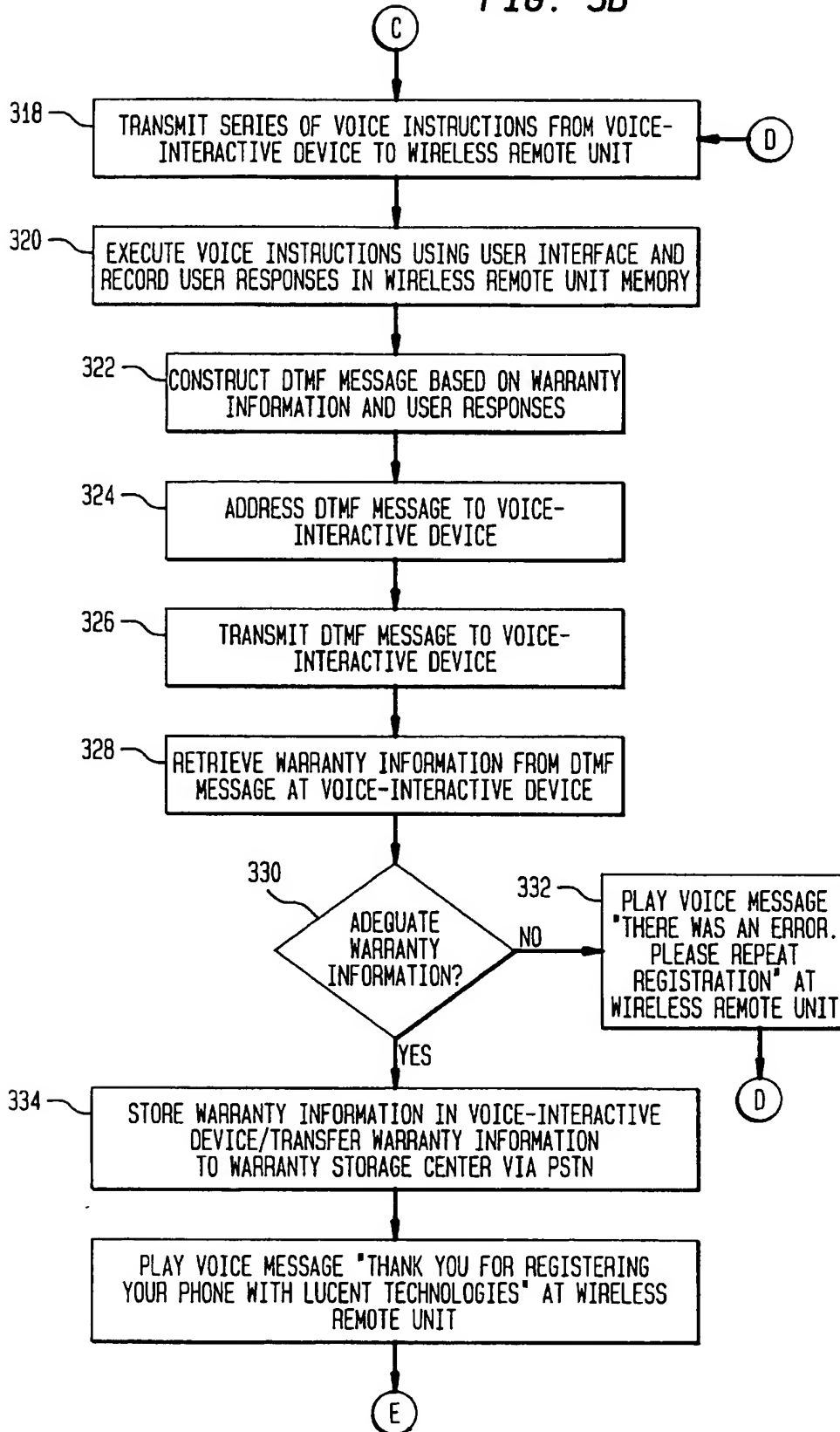
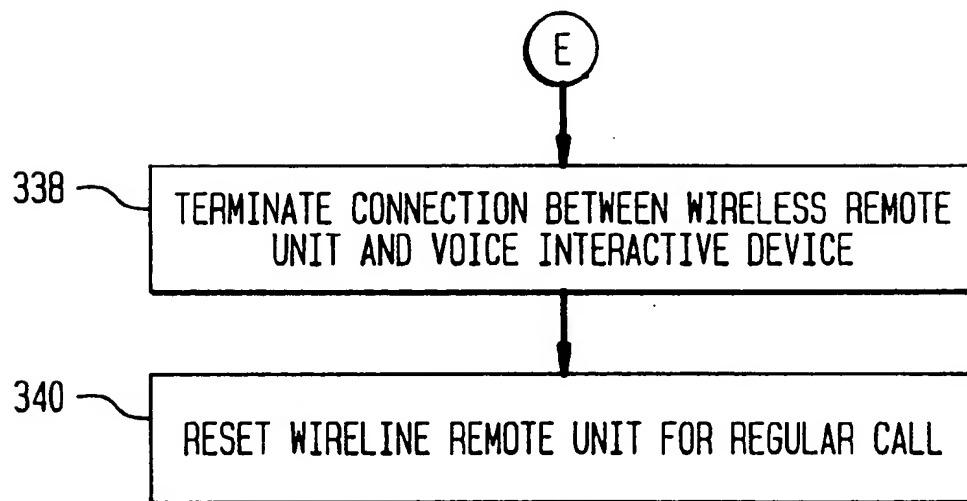


FIG. 3C

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METHODS FOR REGISTERING A WARRANTY FOR A WIRELESS DEVICE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to techniques for registering the warranty of a wireless remote unit in a communication network. More particularly, this invention relates to methods for a user of the wireless remote unit to register with a warranty center by utilizing a wireless-specific transmission medium.

Warranty registration is often ignored by the purchasers of warranted products because of the tedious process of completing a warranty form with various required information and mailing in the completed form. Even the purchasers of electronic products which may carry a fairly certain anticipation of repair needs in the near future avoid submitting the warranty registration until actual breakdowns. This causes disruption to the manufacturers of products because the manufactures may not be able to accurately estimate the costs related to the repairs covered under the warranty.

Due to the recent increase in the number of personal computers that are equipped with modem capability, the process for registering a warranty has been dramatically automated. The purchasers of new personal computers are requested in its first use to input warranty-related information and, by utilizing the modem, to register with the personal computer manufacturer for warranty service via a telecommunication network.

However, wireless remote units such as cellular telephones have not seen the benefits of such automatic warranty registration processes due to the complexities and difficulties associated with transferring data via a wireless network in contrast to the landline trunks of a public telecommunication network.

Another shortcoming of present-day warranty administration for wireless remote units (e.g., cellular telephones) is the questionable accuracy of the start date of the warranty period. For example, the date information may be missing from the paper warranty form that is submitted. This invention improves upon the current methods by automatically identifying and storing the activation date of the wireless remote unit.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide methods for efficiently registering wireless remote units utilizing a wireless transmission medium.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This and other objects of the invention are accomplished in accordance with the principles of the invention by providing warranty registration methods for a wireless remote unit located in a communication network. The communication network includes a wireless network, a message center and a warranty center.

A warranty registration process may be performed using a message, such as a wireless text message. The registration process involves constructing a wireless text message based on user-specific information that is input by the user in response to a request, and remote-unit-specific information that has been pre-stored in the memory of the remote unit. The text message is subsequently transmitted to the message center and decoded to the warranty information. The warranty information is either stored in a mailbox in the message center or immediately transferred to the warranty center and stored in a warranty database located in the warranty center.

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Alternatively, the registration process may be performed using a wireless voice band tone message, such as Dual Tone Multi-Frequency ("DTMF") tones. In this case the registration process involves constructing a voice band tone message based on the warranty information specific to the user and the wireless remote unit. The voice band tone message is transmitted to a voice-interactive device located in the message center which decodes the voice band tone message to the warranty information. The voice-interactive device may also support the wireless remote unit by providing voice instructions that the user of the wireless unit can follow in order to input necessary information. The decoded warranty information is either stored in the voice-interactive device temporarily until a periodic query by the warranty center or transferred to the warranty center immediately after the decoding process.

Further features of the invention, its nature and various advantages will be more apparent from the accompanying drawings and the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a communication network containing a wireless remote unit, wireless network, message center and warranty center in accordance with the present invention.

FIGS. 2a-2b are a flow chart of the steps involved in registering a warranty for a wireless device in a preferred embodiment of the methods of this invention. FIGS. 2a-2b are sometimes referred to collectively as FIG. 2.

FIGS. 3a-3c are a flow chart of the steps involved in registering a warranty for a wireless device in an alternative embodiment of the methods of the invention. FIGS. 3a-3c are sometimes referred to collectively as FIG. 3.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In accordance with the present invention, communication network 10 includes remote unit 20, wireless network 30, message center 40, public telecommunication network 50 and warranty center 60.

Remote unit 20 can be a cellular phone, pager or any other wireless unit that has access to wireless network 30. Remote unit 20 may include user interface 22, central processor unit 24, memory 26 and wireless transmitter and receiver 28. User interface 22 typically includes a screen, a keypad, a microphone and/or a speaker. Central processor unit 24 executes various wireless protocols to facilitate transmission and receipt of data. More specifically, the network interworking functions of central processor unit 24 encode various information including voice, text, image, data and/or video into a data-versed medium that is transferable via wireless network 30 based on various protocols defined by the communication industry.

For example, a wireless messaging service, called Short Message Service ("SMS"), is extensively used in paging services to transfer alphanumeric text messages from a wireless device to a message center or vice versa. In order to use such a messaging service, central processor unit 24 locates an appropriate protocol and stored information from memory 26 and constructs a message. The SMS capabilities for Code Division Multiple Access ("CDMA") are further defined in the standard TIA/EIA IS-637. The SMS capabilities for Time Division Multiple Access ("TDMA") are further defined in the standard TIA/EIA IS-136. The mes-

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sage service may also be the mobile-originated message capability of a Global System Mobile ("GSM") wireless remote unit. The technology described above can be used in any wireless access technology by making use of the short-message service capability within that technology.

Another example for a transferable medium is Dual Tone Multi-Frequency ("DTMF") tones. The DTMF tones are voice band tones that are used for dialing and conveying control information. In a wireless phone, DTMF tones are used to convey control information to message center 40.

Other examples of information that can be converted into a transferable medium are facsimile images, electronic mail messages and video clips.

Memory 26 stores various data including speed-dial numbers, user-specific functions, protocols and warranty information specific to remote unit 20. The warranty information may include a serial number, model number, product configuration and customer information. Wireless transmitter/receiver 28 transfers data from and to message center 40 via wireless network 30.

Wireless network 30 may include base stations, regional stations, central stations and transmitters that are interconnected by landline trunks and wireless connections.

Message center 40 may include either mailbox 42 or voice-interactive device 44 or both of these units. Specifically, mailbox 42 is capable of receiving and storing SMS messages from remote unit 20 via wireless network 30, while voice-interactive device 44 is capable of receiving and storing DTMF tones from remote unit 20 via wireless network 30. Message center 40 further includes message center server 46 which is connected to mailbox 42 and voice-interactive device 44 for facilitating decoding of SMS messages and/or DTMF tones. Message center server 46 also transfers decoded warranty information to warranty center 60, either periodically or instantaneously upon the receipt of the SMS messages and/or DTMF tones.

Warranty center 60 includes warranty storage center server 62 and warranty database 64. Warranty storage center server 62 is connected to message center server 46 in order to transfer decoded warranty information from either mailbox 42 or voice-interactive device 44 to warranty information database 64. Warranty database 64 may be a set of duplicative storage located in different sites in order to provide reliability in case of natural disasters.

The steps involved in registering a warranty for wireless remote unit 20 using SMS messages is illustrated in FIG. 2. In step 200, central processor unit 24 of remote unit 20 detects activation of remote unit 20 by the user who, for example, presses an on-off key. In step 202, central processor unit 24 transmits a registration message from wireless transmitter/receiver 28 in order to register with wireless network 30.

If this is the initial activation, the wireless remote unit 20 at step 203 will derive the current date and/or time from control channel information of wireless network 30, and then store this value as the initial activation date in memory unit 26. The recordation of the initial activation date in memory 26 prevents prolonging of the warranty period.

In step 204, central processor unit 24 prompts a user input on user interface 22, for example, a Liquid Crystal Display ("LCD") or a speaker. User interface 22 displays or announces a warranty registration request to which the user responds, for example, by simply pressing one key to proceed with the registration process. Alternatively, user interface 22 may ask the user to input the user's name, address, phone number, the date and location of the remote

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unit 20 purchase, and other ancillary information. This information identifies the user of remote unit 20 and triggers the running of the warranty period. The warranty registration request may also ask the user to provide, on an optional basis, some demographic information including, for example, the frequency of remote unit 20 usage and the type of remote unit 20 usage such as Internet browsing.

In step 206, central processor unit 24 determines whether the user of remote unit 20 has responded positively, i.e., whether proper information has been input in compliance with the warranty information request. If not, central processor unit 24 in step 210 reprompts a user input on the user's next activation of remote unit 20. In step 211, central processor unit 24 configures remote unit 20 for a regular phone call to be made by the user.

If central processor unit 24 determines that the user has responded positively to the warranty registration request, central processor unit 24 in step 212 retrieves the warranty information that is pre-stored in memory 26 at the remote unit's production facility. For example, the pre-stored warranty information may include the serial and model number of remote unit 20, the phone number of the message center and the identification of the designated warranty storage center.

In step 214, central processor unit 24 constructs an SMS message based on the warranty information that is input by the user and retrieved from memory 26. In step 216, central processor unit addresses the SMS message to appropriate mail box 42 in message center 40. In step 218, central processor unit 24 further constructs a wireless origination message containing information that is necessary to establish a wireless connection.

In step 220, remote unit 20 establishes a connection between remote unit 20 and mailbox 42 located in message center 40 via wireless network 30 based on the wireless origination message. In step 222, wireless transmitter/receiver transmits the SMS message to mailbox 42.

In step 224, message center server 46 retrieves the warranty information from the SMS message. Optionally, message center server 46 in step 226 further determines whether the retrieved warranty information is adequate to process a warranty registration. If not, message center server 46 requests remote unit 20 to retransmit the SMS message that contains adequate information.

If it is determined that all necessary information for the warranty registration has been received, message center server 46 in step 230 either stores the warranty information in mailbox 42 or immediately transfers the warranty information to warranty storage center 60 via Public Switch Telephone Network ("PSTN") 50. If the warranty information is stored in mailbox 42, warranty storage center server 62 periodically accesses mailbox 42 to download the recent warranty information to warranty database 64.

In step 232, message center server 46 transmits an acknowledgment message to remote unit 20 confirming that the warranty registration process is complete. Central processor unit 24 in step 234 terminates the connection between remote unit 20 and message center 40. In step 236, central processor unit 24 resets itself for a regular phone call to be made by the user.

The order of the steps in FIG. 2 is not critical. For example step 204 can occur earlier in the process before step 202.

FIG. 3 shows adaptation of the method of FIG. 2 to an alternative embodiment utilizing DTMF tones rather than SMS messages. Many of the steps in FIG. 3 are the same as or similar to steps in FIG. 2, except for the DTMF-specific

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steps (e.g., steps 316, 318, 320, 322, 324, 326, 328, 330, 332, 334, 336 and 338). Thus, the discussion of some of the steps in FIG. 3 can be somewhat abbreviated because more extensive discussion has already been provided for corresponding steps in FIG. 2.

In step 300, central processor unit 24 of remote unit 20 detects activation of remote unit 20 by the user. At step 302, central processor unit 24 transmits a registration message from wireless transmitter/receiver 28 in order to register with wireless network 30.

If this is the initial activation, the wireless remote unit 20 at step 303 will derive the current date and/or time from control channel information of wireless network 30, and then store this value as the initial activation date in memory unit 26. The recordation of the initial activation date in memory 26 prevents prolonging of the warranty period.

In step 304, central processor unit 24 prompts a user input on user interface 22, for example, a Liquid Crystal Display ("LCD") or a speaker. User interface 22 displays or announces a warranty registration request to which the user responds, for example, by simply pressing one key to proceed with the registration process. Alternatively, user interface 22 may ask the user to input the user's name, address, phone number, the date and location of the remote unit 20 purchase, and other ancillary information. This information identifies the user of remote unit 20 and triggers the running of the warranty period.

In step 306, central processor unit 24 determines whether the user of remote unit 20 has responded positively, i.e., whether proper information has been input in response to the warranty information request. If not, central processor unit 24 in step 310 reprompts a user input on the user's next activation of remote unit 20. In step 311, central processor unit 24 resets remote unit 20 for a regular phone call.

If central processor unit 24 determines that the user has responded positively to the warranty registration request, central processor unit 24 in step 312 retrieves the warranty information that is pre-stored in memory 26 at the production facility.

In step 314, central processor unit 24 constructs an origination message containing necessary information to establish a connection to a voice-interactive device (such as the address of voice-interactive device 44), and utilizes wireless transmitter/receiver 28 to transmit the origination message to wireless network 30. In step 316, based on the origination message, a wireless connection is established between remote unit 20 and voice-interactive device 44.

In step 318, voice-interactive device 44 transmits a series of voice instructions to remote unit 20. The instructions may include, for example, an announcement, "Thank you for purchasing a Lucent Technologies™ cellular phone. Using the keypad, please type in your name and the date of purchase." In step 320, central processor unit 24 executes the instructions by utilizing user interface 22 and records the response of the user in memory 26.

In step 322, central processor unit 24 collects all the information (including pre-stored warranty information from memory 26, as well as the user response from step 320) and constructs a DTMF message. In step 324, central processor unit 24 addresses the DTMF message to be delivered to voice-interactive device 44 located in communication network 10. In step 326, central processor unit 26 transmits the DTMF message to voice-interactive device 44 via wireless network 30.

In step 328, message center server 46 retrieves from voice-interactive device 44 the DTMF message and decodes

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the DTMF tones into the warranty information. In step 330, message center server 46 determines whether the decoded warranty information is adequate to proceed with the warranty registration process. If not, message center 40 forwards a voice instruction to remote unit 20 requesting the user to re-enter appropriate information. For example, the voice message may announce: "There was an error. Please repeat registration."

If it is determined that all necessary information for the warranty registration process has been received, message center server 46 in step 334 either stores the warranty information in voice-interactive device 44 or transfers the warranty information to warranty storage center 60 via PSTN 50. If the warranty information is stored in voice-interactive device 44, warranty storage center server 62 may periodically access voice-interactive device 44 to download warranty information to warranty database 64.

In step 336, voice-interactive device 44 transmits an acknowledgment message to remote unit 20 so that the following announcement, for example, can be played at user interface 22: "Thank you for registering your phone with Lucent Technologies™." Central processor unit 24 in step 338 terminates connection between remote unit 20 and message center 40. In step 340, central processor unit 24 resets itself for a regular phone call to be made by the user.

The foregoing is merely illustrative of the principles of this invention and various modifications can be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for registering a warranty for a wireless remote unit in a wireless communication network, said method comprising the steps of:

detecting an activation of said remote unit by a user, said detecting performed by said remote unit;

collecting warranty information specific to said remote unit in response to said detecting said activation of said remote unit by said user and in response to an information request generated at said remote unit;

encoding said warranty information into a warranty message; and

transmitting said warranty message from said remote unit via said wireless communication network so as to register said warranty information.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said warranty information includes a time of said activation of said remote unit.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein said warranty information includes pre-stored information specific to said remote unit.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting step comprises the steps of:

prompting a user input on a user interface of said remote unit during said activation;

receiving a user input in response to said prompting; and proceeding with said collecting step if said user input indicates user compliance with said prompting.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of: reprompting a user input in response to a next activation of said remote unit if said user input received in said receiving step indicates user noncompliance with said prompting.

6. The method of claim 4, further comprising the steps of: receiving user-added information responsive to said prompting; and

encoding said user-added information into said warranty message.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of: receiving an acknowledgment message indicating successful registration of said warranty information.

8. A method for registering a warranty in a wireless communication network, said wireless communication network comprising a message center having a message storage and a message server, comprising the steps of:

receiving a warranty message containing warranty information;

decoding said warranty information from said warranty message;

storing said warranty information in said message storage;

accessing said message storage by said message server periodically to retrieve said stored warranty information; and

transferring said retrieved warranty information so as to register said warranty information.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said communication network comprises a warranty center, and wherein said method further comprises the step of:

storing said transferred warranty information in a warranty storage in said warranty center to register said warranty information.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of: transmitting an acknowledgment message so as to indicate successful registration of said warranty information.

11. A method for registering a warranty for a wireless remote unit in a wireless communication network, said communication network having a message center, said method comprising the steps of:

detecting an activation of said remote unit by a user, said detecting performed by said remote unit;

collecting at said remote unit warranty information specific to said remote unit in response to said detecting said activation of said remote unit by said user and in response to an information request generated at said remote unit;

encoding at said remote unit said warranty information into a wireless message;

transmitting said wireless message from said remote unit to said message center via said wireless communication network;

receiving at said message center said wireless message; and

decoding at said message center said warranty information from said wireless message.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said message center includes an interactive device, and wherein said method further comprises the steps of:

transmitting a registration instruction from said interactive device to said remote unit in response to said detecting;

receiving said registration instruction at said remote unit; playing said registration instruction on a user interface of said remote unit; and

encoding a user response into said wireless message.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein said interactive device comprises a voice-interactive device.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein said communication network comprises a warranty center, and wherein said method further comprises the steps of:

transferring said warranty information to said warranty center; and

storing said warranty information in a warranty database in said warranty center to register said warranty information.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising the steps of:

storing said warranty information in a mailbox located in said message center;

accessing said mailbox periodically to retrieve said stored warranty information; and

proceeding with said transferring step with said retrieved warranty information.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein said wireless message is a text message and said transmitting step employs an alphanumeric message link of said wireless communication network.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein said wireless message is a voice band tone message in a sequence of voice band tones and said transmitting step employs a voice band tone link of said wireless communication network.

18. The method of claim 11, wherein said message includes an image.

19. The method of claim 11, wherein said message includes video information.

20. The method of claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

deriving from said wireless communication network a time of said activation;

storing at a memory of said remote unit said activation time; and

including said activation time in said warranty information.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein said time includes a date of said activation.

* * * * *



US 20010051884A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2001/0051884 A1****Wallis et al.**(43) **Pub. Date: Dec. 13, 2001**(54) **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CONTROLLING WARRANTY-RELATED DATA AND SERVICES**(52) **U.S. Cl. 705/4**(76) **Inventors: Gidon Wallis, New York, NY (US); Evan Press, Brooklyn, NY (US)**(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A system and method of controlling warranty-related data and services provides centralized management of warranty programs for product vendors and purchasers. Data related to sales of products covered by warranties is compiled and processed and user-specific documents are generated. The documents are stored in the system and can be accessed over a computer network such as the Internet. A system server and control application provide a web site that allows a product purchaser to request a repair of a product under warranty, and then automatically arranges for the repair to be made by contacting a parcel delivery service and a repair center. The system receives period updates regarding the repair of the product, and makes the updates available to the system users in the form of accessible documents. The purchaser is able to quickly and easily obtain a repair for a product and be kept informed as to the status of the repair without expending much effort.

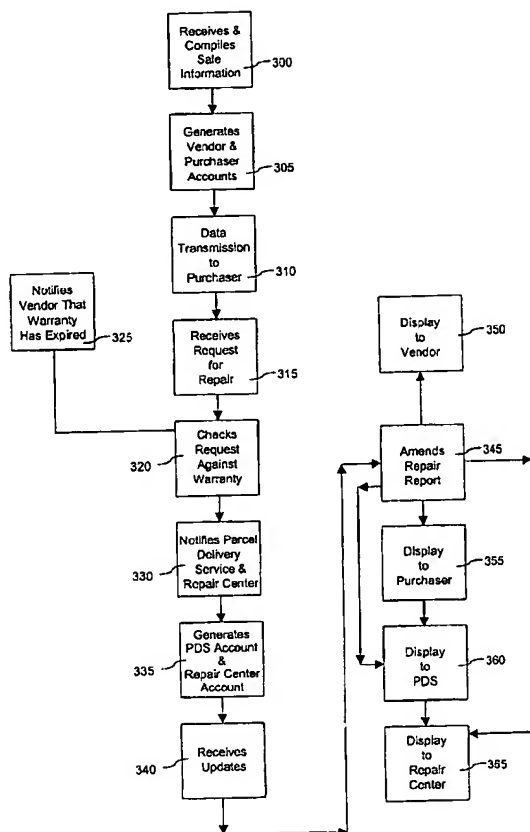
(21) **Appl. No.: 09/879,767**(22) **Filed: Jun. 12, 2001****Related U.S. Application Data**(63) **Non-provisional of provisional application No. 60/211,235, filed on Jun. 12, 2000.****Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.⁷ G06F 17/60**

FIGURE 1

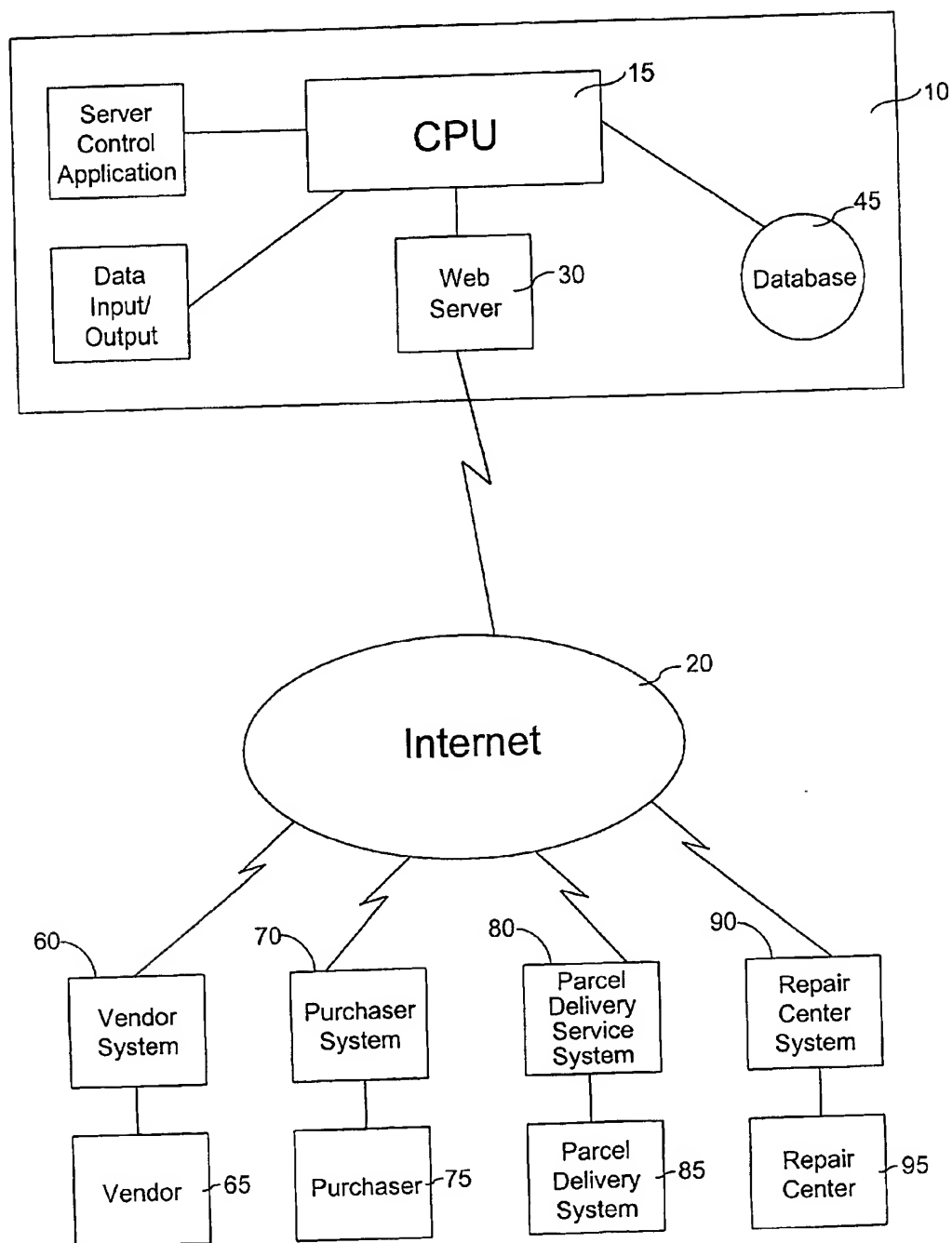


FIGURE 2

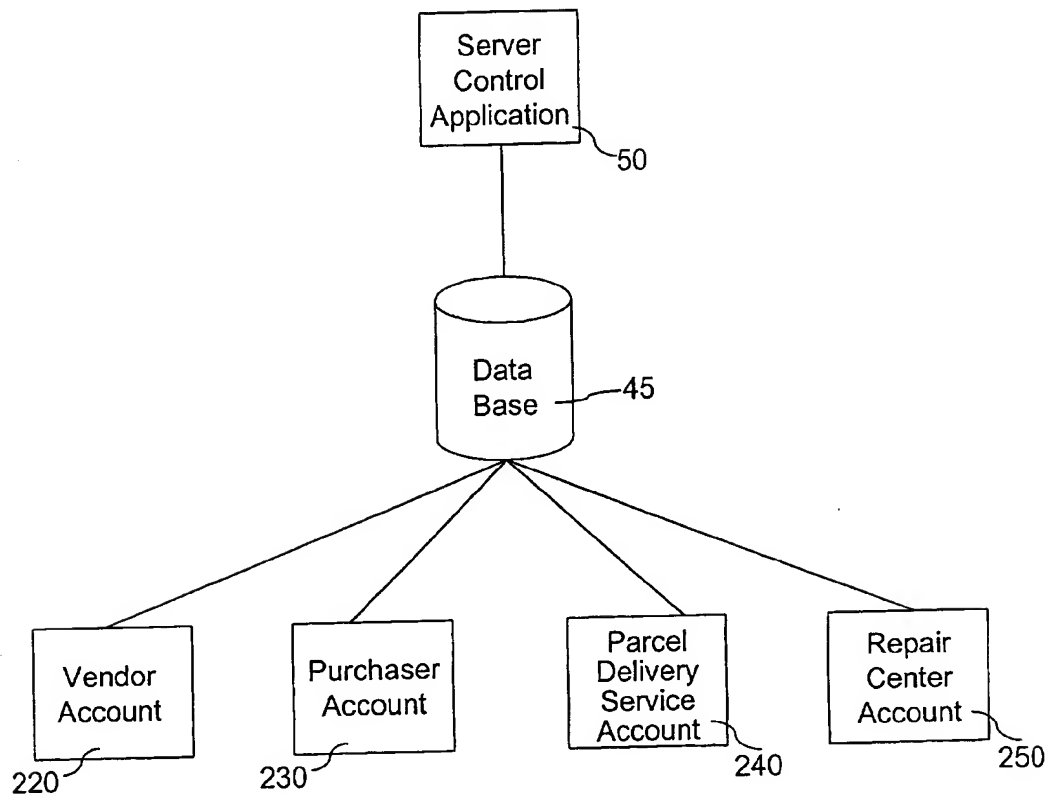


FIGURE 3

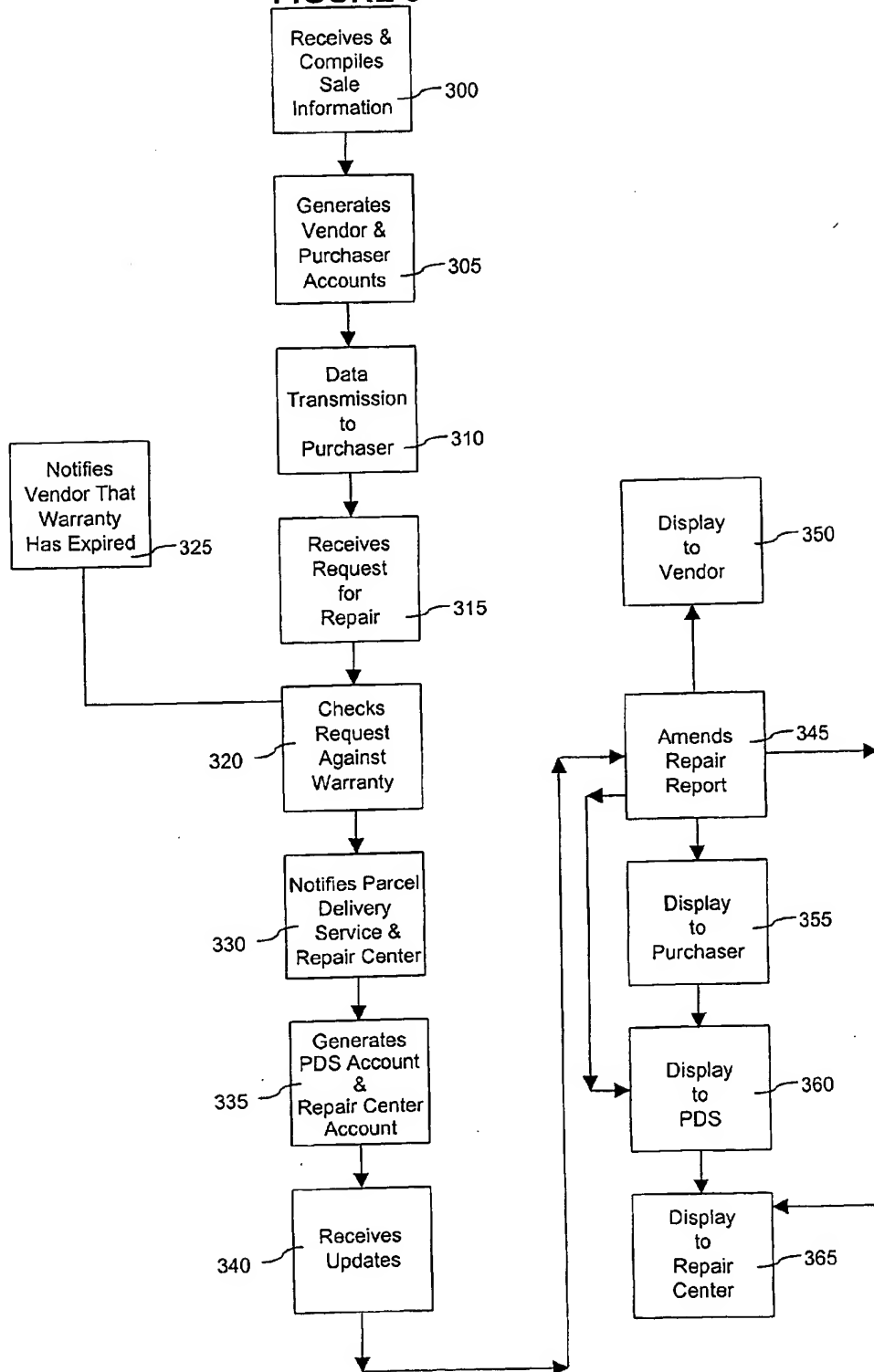


FIGURE 4

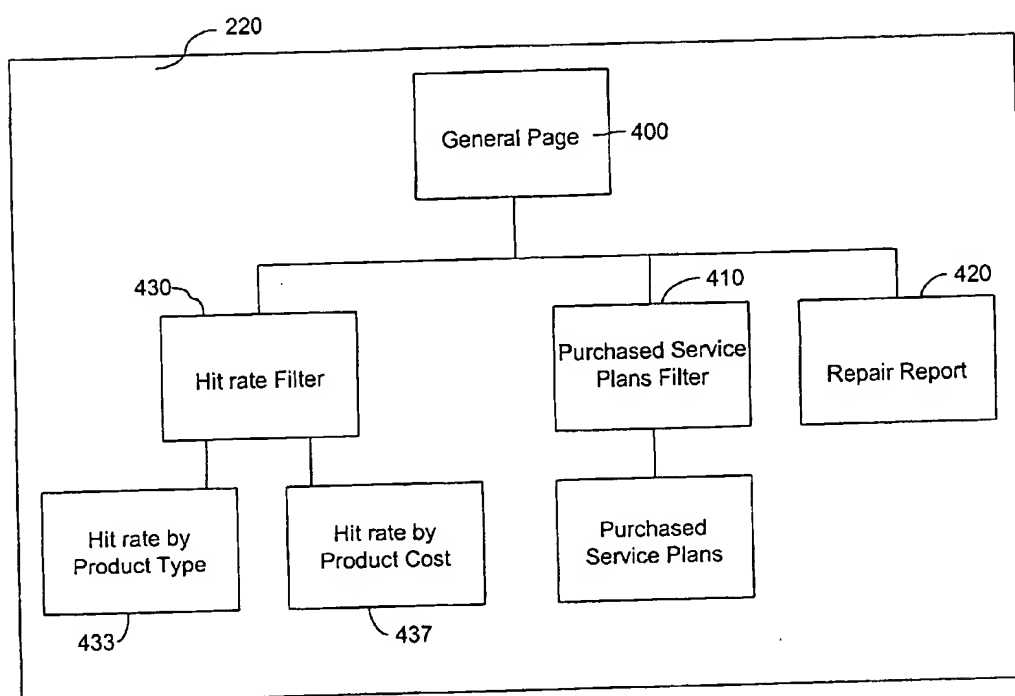


FIGURE 5

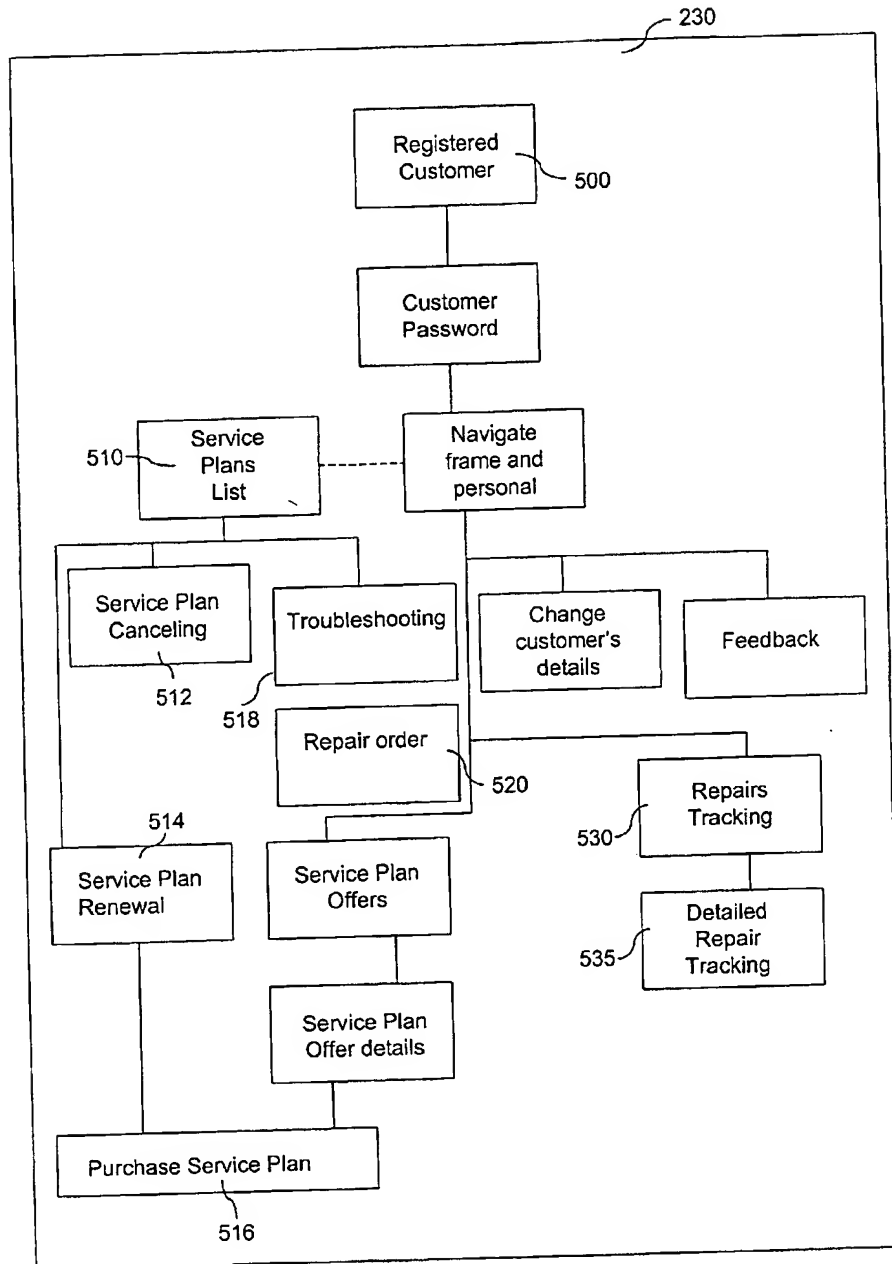


FIGURE 6

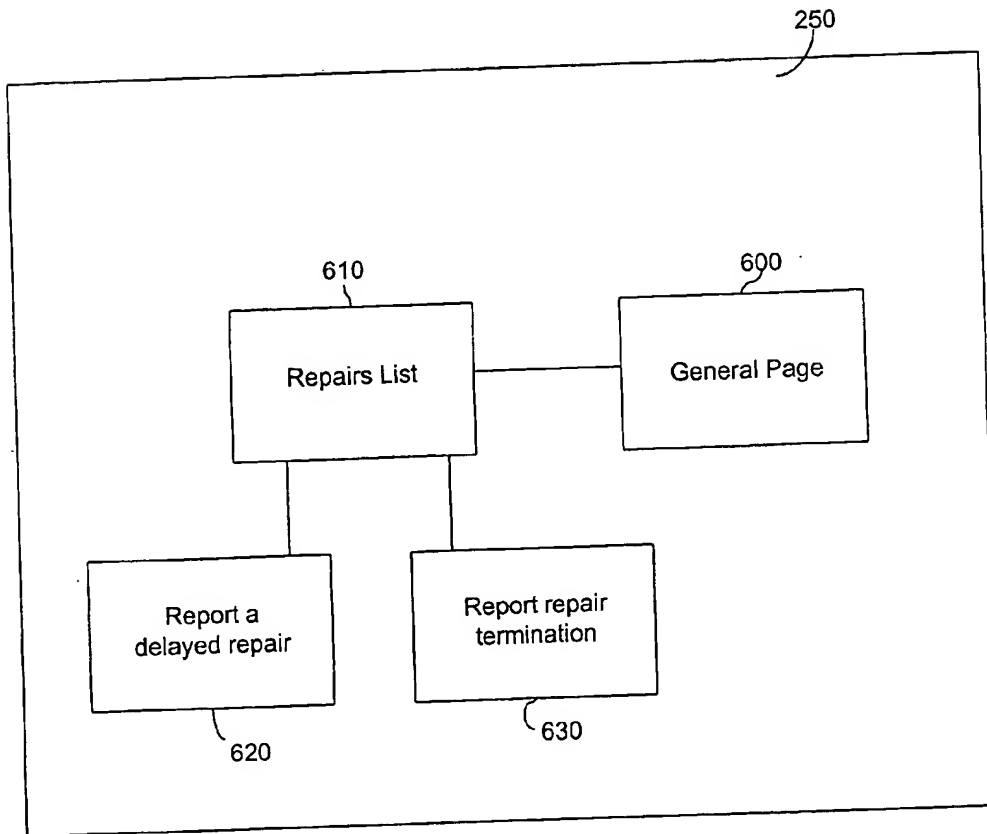
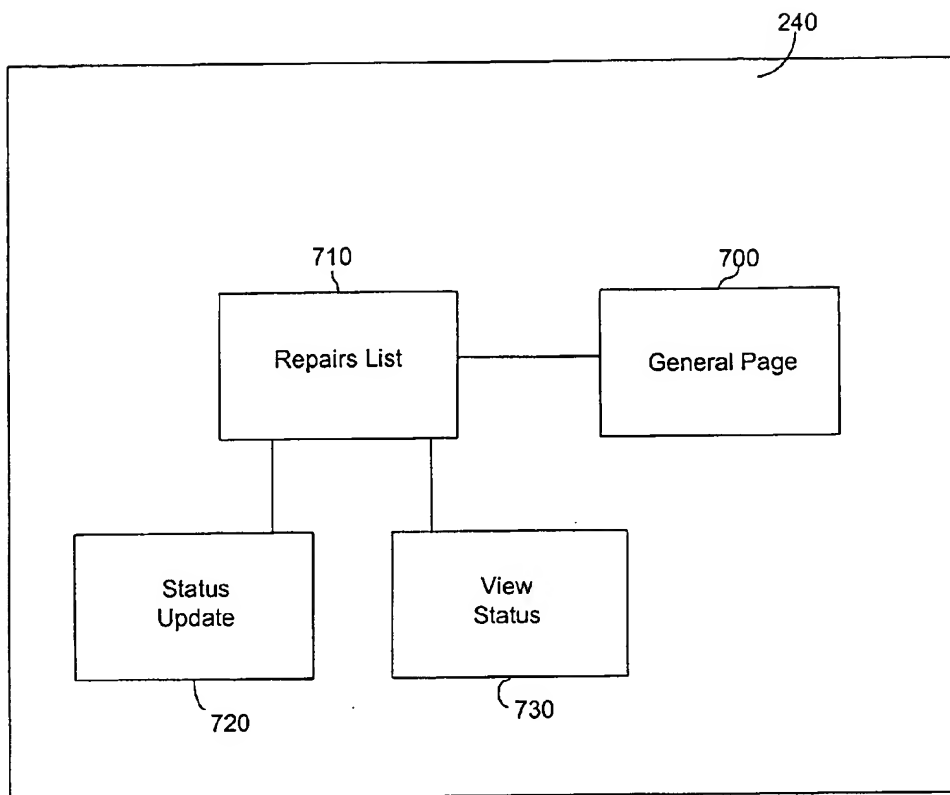


FIGURE 7



METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CONTROLLING WARRANTY-RELATED DATA AND SERVICES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/211,235 filed Jun. 12, 2000, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference herein.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to computer-based commerce. It finds particular application to a warranty administration method and system which provides warranty-related services, including the sale of warranties, the initiation of repairs made pursuant to a warranty, and the creation, maintenance and display of records reflecting various aspects of warranty commerce, all over the Internet.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Billions of dollars are spent each year on products which are covered by warranties. Over and above the purchase price paid for the product, consumers frequently pay a premium for extended or enhanced warranty coverage for the products they purchase. Like other forms of insurance, warranties are typically not at the forefront of a consumer's mind until the coverage they provide is needed. That is, a warranty becomes important when a product fails to perform its intended function. Unfortunately, in addition to the aggravation inherent in buying a defective product, traditional warranty programs make obtaining a repair for the product extremely inconvenient for the aggrieved purchaser. For instance, obtaining a repair frequently requires the consumer to personally transport the product to the product's retailer or authorized repair center. Or if the product is too large to be transported by the consumer, the consumer has to arrange for an on-site repair service to come to his home or office to make the repair. As for the product that the consumer transported to the repair center, chances are that the consumer will have to pick up the repaired product himself. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the product is defective through no fault of the consumer, management of the repair process, and all of the inconvenience inherent therein, is the consumer's burden to bear.

[0004] Recently, electronic or "e-commerce" has emerged as a convenient method for consumers to purchase a variety of goods. In fact, e-commerce has become so prevalent that it is a normative way of conducting sales transactions. Consumers are now spending billions of dollars annually simply by "clicking" on products that appear on their computer screens. Shopping via global computer networks such as the Internet has proven to be both convenient and efficient, and it appears as though sales made over the Internet will only increase in the future. Despite this increased ease and convenience in purchasing products, the management of repairs to these goods is no more convenient than it was prior to the advent of e-commerce—the burden is still on the consumer, and the burden is no different than it is in the brick-and-mortar retailing model. The simplicity and convenience of e-commerce shopping has yet to be extended to the warranty and repair management industry.

[0005] A few prior art warranty management systems include web sites offering extended warranties to consumers. These sites require consumers to provide the site hosts with all of the information necessary for the issuance of a warranty. Therefore, even though these warranty programs owe their existence to the consumers who purchase their warranties, they inconvenience the consumers from the very start. And in return, the consumers are merely provided with a telephone number or an Internet address of a local repair center to contact in the event that a repair to a product is required. The consumer may additionally or alternatively be provided with a phone number to reach a technical support provider or an on-site service provider for larger products. But no matter what these systems provide to a consumer, they require the consumer to manage the repair of the product himself. The consumer is still responsible for either arranging for the product to get to and from the repair center—including the possibility that the consumer may have to transport the product himself—or making the arrangements necessary to have an on-site service provider come into his home. In essence, these web sites provide nothing more than another variation of the traditional brick-and-mortar repair reference service.

[0006] Three such prior art systems are embodied at rebox.com, servicenetdirect.com, and warrantysuperstore.com. These systems enable consumers to manage the repair of products, regardless of the vendor of the products, from a single website. However, all of these systems require that the consumer personally enter all of the product data required for the warranties on these products. Moreover, none of these systems save the consumer from having to make all of the repair arrangements himself. Two other systems, embodied at warrantynow.com and repair.com, require the consumer to make his own arrangements for the transport of the product to a service center as well.

[0007] The present invention provides a new and unique warranty administration system and method that cures the above problems and others.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] The present invention simplifies the warranty administration process and makes the purchase of extended warranty protection more attractive to consumers. The inventive system and method described herein are designed to manage a warranty program in such a way that the burden placed on product purchasers and vendors is minimized. The process starts as digital records of a product sale are transmitted by the vendor to the system. Because maintaining computer records of sales is a common business practice for many vendors, the simple act of transmitting the records is hardly a burden to the vendors. More importantly, the purchaser personally does not have to do anything to start the warranty process. The act of making a purchase essentially generates all of the information necessary to administer the warranty process.

[0009] Once the record of the product sale is transmitted to the system of the present invention, the system generates and sends an electronic message to the purchaser of the product. The message introduces the purchaser to the system and its services. The message also instructs the purchaser as to the simplicity of the system in the event that a repair to the product becomes necessary. Through the system, the

purchaser is able view an on-line account of all of his purchases and the warranty plans covering each product. If one of the products requires servicing, the purchaser simply electronically selects an option which requests the initiation of the repair process.

[0010] Upon receipt of a request for repair, the system notifies a parcel delivery service to pick up the product and deliver it to a repair center. The system also notifies the repair center that the product will be delivered for service. Therefore, after merely requesting a repair for his product, the purchaser's responsibility in managing the repair process is complete. The process is then controlled by the system of the present invention until the repaired product is returned to the purchaser.

[0011] The vendor, parcel delivery service, and the repair center are all able to access their own accounts within the system as well. The system generates the accounts automatically. The vendor can view a list of all of the products it has sold, and the warranty plan covering each product. The system also performs data analysis functions for the benefit of the vendor. For example, the vendor can view a report which analyzes the percentage of extended warranties sold for a certain type of product, or for all products in a particular price range. This information is valuable for future business decisions to be made by the vendor.

[0012] The parcel delivery service and the repair center access the system so that users of the system, including the parcel delivery service and the repair center themselves, can track the progress or status of product repairs. The parcel delivery service and the repair center transmit status updates to the system, and the updates can then be viewed by the system's users. This allows for efficient coordination between the parcel delivery service and the repair center, and it keeps the purchaser informed of the status of the repair to his product. This is comforting for the purchaser, and it is convenient for the vendor, the parcel delivery service, and the repair center because they will not need to field telephone calls from the purchaser (or each other) inquiring as to the status of the repair.

[0013] By controlling the warranty administration process over a computer network, the system of the present invention makes the process more convenient and efficient for all interested parties. For the invention to operate effectively, it is not necessary that all of the system's users utilize the same computer network, such as the Internet. For instance, the parcel deliver service's system could be partially or totally integrated into the inventive system. The crux of the invention is that having the user systems networked in some way to the system of the present invention allows for the central control of the warranty administration process and minimizes the burden on all parties involved in the process.

[0014] Therefore, in accordance with the present invention, a process for controlling the repair of a product under warranty is provided. Information regarding a sale of a product under a warranty plan is compiled in a host system. A data transmission is sent to the purchaser of the product over a computer network, and the data transmission contains an instruction for initiating a repair to the product. The purchaser is provided with access to the host system via a computer network. A request for a repair to the product is received in the host system. A parcel delivery service is notified to pick up the product and deliver it to a repair

center, and the repair center is notified that the product will be delivered for repair. A report regarding the repair of the product is generated and stored as a document maintained in the host system. One or more status updates regarding the repair of the product are received. The report is amended to reflect the status updates. The purchaser is provided with access to the report over a computer network.

[0015] In accordance with a more limited aspect of the present invention, a vendor of the product is provided with access to the host system and the host system receives the information regarding the sale of the product from a data transmission from the vendor over a computer network.

[0016] In accordance with a more limited aspect of the present invention, the parcel delivery service and the repair center are provided with access to the host system and the report over a computer network.

[0017] In accordance with a more limited aspect of the present invention, the repair request and the one or more status updates are received via transmission over a computer network.

[0018] In accordance with yet a more limited aspect of the invention, a purchaser-specific account is generated and maintained within the host system. The purchaser-specific account includes a plurality of selectable options that allow the purchaser to select and view a list of the one or more products purchased by the purchaser, to cancel or amend a warranty plan for one or more of each of the products on the list, initiate a repair of one or more of each of the products on the list, and to view a report corresponding to the repair of each product for which a repair was initiated.

[0019] In accordance with another embodiment of the present invention, a process for administering a warranty program for a plurality of products is provided. One or more data transmissions are received into a host system over a computer network. Each of the data transmissions contains an assemblage of information corresponding to at least one sale of at least one product. Every product sold is identified in the information, and for every product identified, a vendor, a purchaser, and a warranty plan corresponding to each product is also identified. A vendor account is generated for each vendor ultimately identified in the one or more data transmissions. Each vendor account displays a list of each product sold by the particular vendor for whom a vendor account was generated. The vendor account also displays the purchaser and the warranty plan of each product identified as being sold by the vendor. The vendor account is stored as a document in the host system, and the vendor is provided with access to the vendor account over a computer network. A purchaser account is also generated for each purchaser ultimately identified in the one or more data transmissions. Each purchaser account displays a list of each product bought by the particular purchaser for whom a purchaser account was generated. The purchaser account also displays the vendor of each of the products listed in the purchaser account as well as the warranty plan covering each product listed in the purchaser account. The purchaser account is stored as a document in the host system, and the purchaser is provided with access to the purchaser account over a computer network. A set of instructions for accessing the host system is transmitted to the purchaser over a computer network.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] The following is a brief description of each drawing used to describe the present invention, and thus, is being presented for illustrative purposes only and should not be limitative of the scope of the invention, wherein:

[0021] FIG. 1 is an overall diagram of the present invention;

[0022] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of the control application in accordance with the present invention;

[0023] FIG. 3 is a process diagram for administering a warranty program and the repair of a product under a warranty;

[0024] FIG. 4 is a block diagram of a vendor account document in accordance with the present invention;

[0025] FIG. 5 is a block diagram of a purchaser account document in accordance with the present invention;

[0026] FIG. 6 is a block diagram of a repair center account document in accordance with the present invention;

[0027] FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a parcel delivery service account document in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0028] The following includes definitions of exemplary terms used throughout the disclosure. Both singular and plural forms of all terms fall within each meaning:

[0029] "Document", as used herein, includes but is not limited to an electronic document, a web page or any object having text.

[0030] "Software", as used herein, includes but is not limited to one or more computer executable instructions, routines, algorithms, modules or programs including separate applications or ones from dynamically linked libraries for performing functions as described herein. Software may also be implemented in various forms such as a servlet, an applet, a standalone program including a server based application and a user based application, a plug-in or other type of application. Software may also be stored on various computer readable mediums such as disk, CD, tape, memory and can be downloadable.

[0031] "Logic", as used herein, includes but is not limited to hardware, software and/or combinations of both to perform one or more functions.

[0032] "Network", as used herein, includes but is not limited to the Internet, intranets, Wide Area Networks (WANs), Local Area Networks (LANs), and transducer links such as those using Modulator-Demodulators (modems).

[0033] "Internet", as used herein, includes a wide area data communications network, typically accessible by any user having appropriate software.

[0034] "Intranet", as used herein, includes a data communications network similar to an internet but typically having access restricted to a specific group of individuals, organizations, or computers.

[0035] With reference to FIG. 1, a system for controlling a warranty program and controlling the repair of a product under warranty in accordance with the present invention is shown. The system includes a host system 10 of one or more computers which includes a central processing unit 15 that controls the overall functionality of the system. The host system 10 communicates to the Internet 20 via a web server 30 or other network connectivity devices as are known in the art. Of course, it will be appreciated that the present invention may be configured with other types of computer networks as are known to those of ordinary skill in the art. A series of user systems, including one or more vendor systems 60, one or more purchaser systems 70, one or more parcel delivery systems 80, and one or more repair center systems 90, are provided with access to the host system 10 over the Internet 20 or other network. The present invention may also be configured so that access to the host system 10 is limited to any combination of one or more of the user systems 60, 70, 80, 90 depicted in FIG. 1. Through their respective user systems 60, 70, 80, 90, one or more vendors 65, one or more purchasers 75, one or more parcel delivery services 85, and one or more repair centers 95 are able to access the Internet 20 via any appropriate mechanism of Internet connectivity, such as a personal computer including a modem to dial-up an Internet Service Provider.

[0036] With further reference to FIG. 1, the server system 10 includes a database 45 that maintains data relating to the sale of a product, a warranty plan covering the product, and any repairs requested or performed on the product. The data is processed and one or more documents related to the data are generated by the host system 10. These documents will be described in greater detail below. It will be appreciated that the database 45 may include one or more databases based on desired data orientation. A server control application 50 is software executed by the server system 10 that controls the functionality of the server system 10. For example, the control application 50 maintains and provides access to the database 45, controls data communication to the web server 30, defines all web pages accessible by a user 65, 75, 85, 95 at a web site, and defines navigational and page link control. A data input/output component 55 provides for the transfer of data to and from the central processing unit 15, including the documents generated and maintained within the host system 10. The data input/output component 55 includes a magnetic/digital disc device, serial/parallel communication lines, or other data transfer devices as are known in the art.

[0037] With reference to FIG. 2, functions of the overall system and server control application 50 are shown. In particular, server control application 50 includes logic for controlling the generation and amendment of documents stored in the host system 10, as well as generating and transmitting electronic messages to vendors, purchasers, parcel delivery services, and repair centers. This includes processing and storing new data in appropriate records corresponding to a sale of one or more products under warranty, modifying existing data in the database, and retrieving data from the database 45 to be presented to the user 65, 75, 85, 95 at the user system 60, 70, 80, 90. Among the documents stored in the host system 10 are one or more vendor accounts 220. A vendor account is a document through which a vendor 65 is provided with access to a series of additional documents containing information relevant to one or more products sold by the vendor 65. The

documents contained in the vendor account 220 also provide the vendor 65 with one or more selectable options for initiating actions to be executed by the host system 10. The documents provided to the vendor 65 will be described in greater detail below. Also included in the host system 10 is one or more purchaser accounts 230. The purchaser account 230 is a document through which a purchaser 75 is provided with access to a series of additional documents containing information relevant to products purchased by the purchaser 75 which are covered by a warranty. These documents also provide the purchaser 75 with one or more selectable options for initiating actions to be executed by the host system 10. The documents provided to purchaser 75 will be described in greater detail below. The host system 10 also includes one or more Parcel Delivery Service Accounts 240. Through the Parcel Delivery Service Account 240, the server control application 50 receives and stores status updates from the parcel delivery service 85 regarding the status of a delivery of a product for which a request for repair has been made. The parcel delivery service account 240 includes logic for tracking the repair of a product and makes this data accessible to the parcel delivery service 85. And a Repair Center Account 250 allows a repair center 95 to view a list of all of its presently pending repairs, report a delayed repair, and/or report the completion of a repair. The documents contained in the parcel delivery service account 240 and the repair center account 250 will be described in greater detail below.

[0038] Referring to FIG. 3, a process for controlling warranty related data and controlling a repair to a product under a warranty is shown. It will be appreciated that the logic of the host system 10 can be employed to perform the invention for a plurality of products, but, for exemplary purposes, the following description refers to only the process as it occurs for one product at a time. At block 300, the host system 10 receives and compiles information related to the sale of a product. In one embodiment, the information is transmitted by the vendor 65. In one embodiment of the invention, sale of the product occurs as the purchaser 75 buys the product from the vendor over a computer network, where multiple data transmissions may be exchanged between the vendor and the purchaser in the selection of the product and the confirmation of the sale. The information is transmitted to the host system via any known method of communication for example, a computer network. The information contains at least the identity of the product sold, the details of the warranty plan covering the product sold, and the identity and contact information of the purchaser 75 of the product sold. Regarding the identity of the product, the information includes, for example, a make and model number of the product, as well as a purchase price of the product. Regarding the details of the warranty plan, the information includes for example, the duration of the warranty and applicable terms and conditions. The contact information includes, for example, an e-mail address, home address, and telephone number of each purchaser 75 identified in the data transmission.

[0039] At block 305, the host system 10, generates a vendor account 220 and a purchaser account 230 and stores each account in the database 45. This occurs as the logic of the server control application 50 causes the information transmitted into the host system 10 to be processed, thereby establishing the identities the vendor 65 and the purchaser 75 of the product. Once the vendor 65 and the purchaser 75 are identified, a vendor account 220 specific to the vendor 65

identified in the information is established. The server control application 50 processes the remainder of the information and establishes an association between the vendor 65, the purchaser 75, and the product identified in the information received by the host system. This association allows the information to be presented and maintained in the appropriate document or documents within the vendor account 220. A purchaser account 230 specific to the purchaser 75 identified in the information is also established after the purchaser 75 is identified. As it did with the vendor account 220, the server control application 50 processes the remainder of the information so that it may be presented in the appropriate document or documents within the purchaser account 230.

[0040] In the event that the vendor account 220 and/or a purchaser account 230 already exist for the particular vendor 65 or purchaser 75 identified in the information transmitted into the host system 10, no new accounts will be generated. The information will be processed as above, and after the logic of the control application 50 establishes the appropriate association between the vendor 65, the purchaser 75, and the product, the existing vendor account 220 and/or purchaser account 230 will be amended to reflect the new product and warranty information received by the host system 10.

[0041] At block 310, data is transmitted over a computer network to the purchaser 75. For example, this data transmission is in the form of an e-mail message. The data includes instructions for the purchaser 75 to access the host system 10. The instructions explain, for example, how the purchaser 75 can employ the host system 10 for administering the warranty covering the product. This includes an explanation of the repair initiation and tracking services provided by the host system 10, and an explanation of how the purchaser can buy extended warranty coverage or cancel existing warranty coverage for the product. The instructions may also include a purchaser-specific password required for the purchaser 75 to access the Purchaser Account 230.

[0042] At block 315, a request for a repair to the product is received into the host system 10. In one embodiment of the invention, the request is received as the result of the purchaser 75 selecting an option for repair that is provided to the purchaser 75 in the purchaser account 230. This selection could occur, for example, by the purchaser locating the option for repairing a product displayed on his computer monitor and clicking it. The server control application 50 checks the request against the terms of warranty plan for the product at block 320. If the warranty covering the product expired prior to the request being made, notification to that effect is transmitted to the purchaser 75 at block 325. If the product is under its warranty at the time of the request, then a repair request is generated and transmitted to the parcel delivery service 85 and the repair center 95 as notification, and a repair report for the product is generated in the host system 10 at block 330. In another embodiment of the invention, the system will not allow the purchaser 75 to request a repair of a product whose warranty has expired. The logic of the server control application 50 determines the appropriate parcel delivery service 85 and repair center 95 to notify based upon factors including the nature of the product needing repair and the address of the purchaser 75. In one embodiment of the present invention, the notice is sent to the parcel delivery service 85 and the repair center 95 over a

computer network. The repair report, for example, identifies the product to be repaired, the purchaser 75 of the product, the parcel delivery service notified, the repair center notified, and the date that the request was made.

[0043] At block 335, a parcel delivery service account 240 and a repair service account 250 are generated by the host system 10 and stored in the database 45. The parcel delivery service account 240 and the repair service account 250 are generated in much the same way as are the vendor account 220 and the purchaser account 230.

[0044] At block 340 one or more updates regarding the status of the repair are received by host system 10 from the parcel delivery service 85 and/or the repair center 95. The updates include, for example, reports such as the location of the product as it is in transit to or from the purchaser 75 or the repair center 95. The updates can also include the time and date that the product is delivered to or picked up from the repair center 95. Moreover, the updates can also include reports regarding the progress or completion of the repair, or the estimated time of completion. In one embodiment of the present invention, the one or more updates are transmitted into the host system 10 over a computer network. In one embodiment, the host system 10 provides selectable options provided in the parcel delivery service account 240 and/or the repair center account 250 for the parcel delivery service 85 and/or the repair center 95 to transmit the updates to the host system 10. At block 345, server control application 50 provides for the repair report to be amended to reflect the one or more status updates received by the host system 10.

[0045] At block 350, the host system 10 provides the vendor 65 with an option to view a display of the repair report. The repair report is displayed to the purchaser 75 at block 355 if a request for the display of the repair report is received into the host system 10 from the purchaser 75. At block 360, the repair report is displayed to the parcel delivery service 85 if a request for the display of the repair report is received into the host system 10 from the parcel delivery service 85. At block 365, the repair report is displayed to the repair center 95 if a request for the display of the repair report is received into the host system 10 from the repair center 95. It is preferred that any request for viewing the repair report be received as the result of the vendor 65, purchaser 75, parcel delivery service 85 and/or the repair center 95 selecting an option for viewing the report that is presented in the vendor account 220, the purchaser account 230, the parcel delivery service account 240 and/or the repair center account 250, respectively. At the completion of the repair, the product will be returned to the purchaser 75 from the parcel delivery service 85.

[0046] As alluded to above, the process outlined in FIG. 3 can also be employed to administer a warranty program for a plurality of products, or to administer the repair of a plurality of products. The host system 10 is capable of receiving multiple data transmissions, each data transmission containing an assemblage of information. An assemblage of information includes, for example, the sale of multiple products made by one vendor to multiple purchasers. In such a case, the logic of the server control application 50 generates a vendor account 220 for the one vendor 65, wherein the vendor account 220 contains, for example, information regarding the sale of every product identified within the assemblage of information. In the event that the

control application 50 determines that a vendor account 220 is already in existence for the vendor 65 identified in the assemblage of information, the existing vendor account is updated with the new sales information contained in the assemblage of information. A purchaser account 230 is also generated for each purchaser 75 identified in the assemblage of information. Each purchaser account 230 contains, for example, sales information pertaining only to the products bought by the purchaser 75 for whom the purchaser account 230 was established. As with the vendor accounts 220, if a purchaser account 230 is already maintained within the database 45 for one or more of the purchasers 75 identified in the assemblage of information, then the existing purchaser account 230 or accounts are amended accordingly. The host system 10 is also able to receive data transmissions from multiple vendors. The assemblage of information contained in each data transmission will be processed in the same manner as described above.

[0047] The host system 10 is also able to process multiple requests for repair from multiple purchasers, with the process outlined in FIG. 3 beginning at block 315 then occurring for each request made.

[0048] Regarding FIG. 4, an embodiment of a vendor account 220 is shown. A general page 400 allows the vendor 65 to access and view other documents contained within the vendor account 220. For instance, the vendor 65 is provided access a Service Plans Report document 410 that provides a list of all products sold by the vendor 65 that are covered by a warranty. The vendor is also provided with the option of viewing the details of the warranty plan covering any of the products listed through access to the Service Plans Report document 410. In addition, a Repair Report document 420 is also provided in the vendor account 220, allowing the vendor to view a list of products sold by the vendor for which a repair has been requested, is pending, or has been completed. Through the Repair Report document 420 the vendor 65 is also provided with the option of viewing the detailed status of any requested or pending repairs. The vendor account 220 may additionally include a Hit Rate Report 430, which provides the vendor 65 with an analysis of the percentage of products sold for which an extended warranty plan was purchased (the "hit rate"). The vendor 65 is also provided with the option of viewing the hit rate computed by product type 433, e.g. televisions, or the hit rate by product cost 437, which for example, would provide the percentage of extended warranty plans purchased for products costing over \$2000.00, or between \$250.00 and \$500.00, or by any cost parameter selected by the vendor 65.

[0049] With reference with FIG. 5, an embodiment of a purchaser account 230 is shown. A general page 500 allows the purchaser 75 to access and view other documents contained within the purchaser account 230. The purchaser is provided with access to a Service Plans List document 510 which identifies the warranty plan covering each product purchased by the purchaser 75. From the Service Plans List document 510, the host system 10 allows the purchaser 75 to access a Service Plan Canceling document 512, a Service Plan Renewal document 514, a Purchase Service Plan document 516, a Troubleshooting document 518, and a Repair Order document 520.

[0050] Consistent with its name, the Service Plan Canceling document 512 provides the purchaser 75 with the option of canceling warranty protection for any of the products listed in the Service Plans List 510. In one embodiment of the invention, the control application 50 determines the amount of the warranty purchase price to be refunded to the purchaser 75 upon cancellation. The refund is calculated by determining the purchaser's 75 state of residence, and then utilizing a formula consistent and in compliance with the laws of that state for issuing refunds. In addition to canceling warranty protection, the purchaser 75 is provided with the option of renewing the terms of any of his warranties through the Service Plan Renewal document 514, and buying an extended warranty plan at the Purchase Service Plan document 516. If one of the purchaser's products is not operating properly, the host system allows the purchaser 75 to attempt to diagnose the product's defect by accessing the Troubleshooting document 518. The troubleshooting document 518 provides a list of various malfunctions particular to the product identified by the purchaser 75. The troubleshooting document 518 then attributes a possible cause for each malfunction, and if applicable, instructs the purchaser 75 how to remedy the malfunction himself. In the event that a product needs repair, the host system 10 provides the purchaser 75 with an option to request the repair through the Repair Order document 520. In one embodiment of the invention, a list of all of the products bought by the purchaser for which warranty protection is available is displayed in the Repair Order document 520, and the purchaser 75 is provided with the option of initiating the repair process by simply highlighting and selecting the product requiring repair. A Repairs Tracking document 530 is also provided for access in the Purchaser Account 230. From the Repairs Tracking document 530, a Detailed Repair Tracking Document 535 is also provided. The Repairs Tracking document 530 and the Detailed Repair Tracking Document 535 are provided to allow the purchaser 75 to view a list of all the products for which a repair is in process, or to allow the purchaser to view the status of each repair or to track the repair of a specific product through accessing the Repair Tracking document 530.

[0051] Referring to FIG. 6, an embodiment of a repair center account 250 is shown. The repair center account 250 provides a General Page document 600 which allows the repair center 95 to access and view other documents contained within the repair center account 250. A Repairs List document 610 provides with a display of all of the repairs pending at the repair center 95. From the Repairs List document 610, the host system 10 provides the repair center with the option of electronically transmitting a report of a delayed repair at Delayed Repair document 620 or a terminated repair at Terminated Repair document 630. The information in the reports received by the host system 10 through the Repairs List document 610 are appended into the Repairs Tracking document 530 in the Purchaser Account 230.

[0052] Referring to FIG. 7, the embodiment of the parcel delivery service account 240 is shown. A general page document 700 is provided, and allows a parcel delivery service 85 to access and view other documents contained within the parcel delivery service account 240. A Repairs List document 710 allows the parcel delivery service 85 to view a list of all the products for which delivery has been requested or is pending. The Repairs List document 710 provides the parcel delivery service with the option of

updating the status of a delivery at a Status Update document 720 or viewing the status of a repair at a View Status document 730. In another embodiment of the invention, the parcel delivery service system 80 is partially or fully integrated with the host system 10, and the tracking software employed by the parcel delivery system to track its own deliveries automatically transmits status updates to the host system 10. Any status updates received from the parcel delivery service 85 are appended into the Repairs Tracking document 530.

[0053] The invention has been described with reference to the preferred embodiment. Obviously, modifications and alterations will occur to others upon a reading and understanding of this specification. It is intended to include all such modifications and alterations as they come within the scope of the appended claims or the equivalence thereof.

What is claimed is:

1. A process for controlling a repair of a product under warranty, the process comprising the steps of:

compiling information in a host system regarding a sale of the product under warranty, the information identifying the product, a vendor of the product, a purchaser of the product, and a warranty plan for the product;

providing the purchaser with a set of instructions for initiating a repair of the product via a transmission of data over a computer network;

providing the purchaser with access to the host system via a computer network;

receiving a request for a repair to be made to the product in the host system;

notifying a parcel delivery service to pick up the product from the customer and deliver the product to a repair center;

notifying the repair center that the product will be delivered for repair;

generating a report regarding the repair of the product;

storing the report in a document maintained within the host system;

receiving one or more status updates from the parcel delivery service or the repair center containing information regarding the repair of the product;

amending the report to reflect the information contained in the one or more status updates;

providing the purchaser with access to the report over a computer network.

2. The process as set forth in claim 1 wherein the controlling of the repair of a product under warranty further includes:

providing the vendor with access to the host system via a computer network; and

the compiling information regarding the sale of the product under warranty further includes receiving the information via a transmission from the vendor over a computer network.

3. The process as set forth in claim 2 wherein the controlling of the repair of a product under warranty further includes:

providing the parcel delivery service and the repair center with access to the host system via a computer network; and

receiving the request for a repair and the one or more status updates in the host system via transmission over a computer network.

4. The process as set forth in claim 3 wherein the controlling the repair of a product under warranty further includes:

maintaining a purchaser-specific account within the host system; and

providing the purchaser with access to the purchaser-specific account via a computer network.

5. The process as set forth in claim 4 wherein the maintaining customer-specific account further includes:

displaying a plurality of selectable options;

allowing the selection of one of the selectable options;

receiving a selection; and

displaying a document corresponding to the selection.

6. The process as set forth in claim 5 wherein the selectable options include:

viewing a display of a list of one or more products purchased by the purchaser;

canceling or purchasing a warranty plan for each one of the one or more products displayed on the list;

initiating a repair for one or more of each of the one or more products displayed on the list; and

viewing a report corresponding to each of the one or more products for which a repair was initiated.

7. The process set forth in claim 6 wherein the sale of the product under warranty is made via one or more transmissions between the purchaser and the vendor over a computer network.

8. The process as set forth in claim 7 wherein providing the purchaser, the vendor, the parcel delivery service, and the repair center with access to the host system includes providing a website including a user interface accessible over the Internet, the user interface providing one or more selectable options.

9. A process for controlling warranty-related data and services for a plurality of products, the process comprising the steps of:

receiving one or more data transmissions into a host system over a computer network, each one of the one or more data transmissions containing an assemblage of information corresponding to at least one sale of at least one of the plurality of products;

identifying within each assemblage of information each one of the at least one of the plurality of products sold;

identifying within each assemblage of information a vendor, a purchaser, and a warranty plan corresponding to each one of the at least one of the plurality of products sold;

establishing an association between each one of the at least one of the plurality of products and the vendor, the purchaser, and the warranty plan corresponding thereto;

generating a vendor account for each vendor identified in the one or more assemblages of information, the vendor account comprising a display of each one of the at least one product sold by the vendor, where the display includes the purchaser of each one of the at least one product sold by the vendor and the warranty plan for each one of the at least one product sold by the vendor;

storing the vendor account as a document in the host system;

providing the vendor with access to the vendor account via a computer network;

generating a purchaser account for each purchaser identified in the one or more assemblages of information, the purchaser account comprising a display of each of the at least one of the plurality of the products bought by the purchaser, where the display includes the vendor of each of the at least one of the plurality of the products bought by the purchaser and the warranty plan for each of the at least one of the plurality of the products bought by the purchaser;

storing the purchaser account in a database in the host system;

providing the purchaser with access to the purchaser account via a computer network;

transmitting a set of instructions to the purchaser over a computer network, the set of instructions including an instruction for accessing the host system via a computer network.

10. The process as set forth in claim 9, wherein the controlling warranty-related data and services further includes:

receiving a transmission over a computer network containing a request for repair, the request identifying at least one of the at least one product displayed in the purchaser account;

designating a repair center to repair each one of the at least one product identified in the request;

notifying a parcel delivery service to pick up each one of the at least one product identified in the request and deliver each one of the at least one product to a repair center designated by the host system;

notifying the repair center designated for each one of the at least one product for which the request for repair was made that each one of the at least one product identified in the request will be delivered for repair;

generating a repair report for each one of the at least one product identified in the request;

storing each one of the at least one repair report as a document maintained within the host system;

receiving one or more status updates from the parcel delivery service or the repair center containing information regarding the repair of each one of the at least one product identified in the request;

amending each one of the at least one repair report to reflect the information contained in one or more repair status updates; and

providing the purchaser with access to each one of the at least one repair report over a computer network.

11. The process as set forth in claim 10 wherein the receiving the one or more data transmissions into the host system further includes receiving the one or more data transmissions from each vendor identified in the one or more data transmissions.

12. The process as set forth in claim 11 wherein the controlling warranty-related data and services further includes:

providing the parcel delivery service and the repair center with access to the host system via a computer network; receiving the one or more status updates via a transmission over a computer network; and

providing the parcel delivery service and the repair center with access to each one of the at least one repair report via a computer network.

13. The process as set forth in claim 12 wherein the controlling warranty-related data and services further includes:

processing the request to identify the vendor and the warranty plan corresponding to each one of the at least one product identified in the request;

notifying the vendor of each one of the at least one product identified in the request that the repair request was made; and

providing the vendor of each of the least one of the products identified in the request with access to the repair report corresponding to each of the at least one product identified in the request for which the vendor is identified.

14. The process as set forth in claim 13 wherein the controlling warranty related data and services further includes:

generating a parcel delivery service account document and a repair center account document for the parcel delivery service and the repair center notified of the request;

providing the parcel delivery service with access to the parcel delivery service account document over a computer network; and

providing the repair center with access to the repair center account document over a computer network.

15. The process as set forth in claim 14 wherein providing the purchaser, the vendor, the parcel delivery service, and the repair center for each of the at least one of the plurality

of products sold with access to the host system includes providing a website including a user interface accessible over the Internet, the user interface providing one or more selectable options that, when at least one of the one or more options is selected, the repair report will be displayed.

16. A system for controlling warranty-related data and services, the system comprising:

a user interface accessible over a computer network for a plurality of users;

a data input/output component for receiving data containing warranty-related information over a computer network, transferring the data within the system, and transmitting the data over a computer network;

a database for storing the data within the system;

logic for processing the data containing warranty-related information to identify a product, and also identify a vendor, a purchaser, and a warranty plan corresponding to the product;

logic for establishing an association between the product, the vendor, the purchaser, and the warranty plan;

logic for generating a vendor account document and a purchaser account document;

logic for transmitting an electronic message to the purchaser upon receipt of the data containing warranty-related information;

logic for processing a request for a repair to the product and notifying a parcel delivery service and a repair center of the request;

logic for generating a repair report corresponding to the request for a repair;

logic for processing one or more status updates containing data regarding the status of the repair;

logic for amending the report to reflect the data regarding the repair;

logic for generating a parcel delivery service account document and a repair center account document; and

logic for displaying the vendor account document to the vendor, the purchaser account document to the purchaser, the parcel delivery service account document to the parcel delivery service, and the repair center account to the repair center, all over a computer network.

* * * * *



US 20010042022A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2001/0042022 A1****Kirkpatrick et al.**(43) **Pub. Date: Nov. 15, 2001**(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR POINT OF PURCHASE PRODUCT REGISTRATION****Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.⁷ G06F 17/60**(52) **U.S. Cl. 705/26; 705/10**

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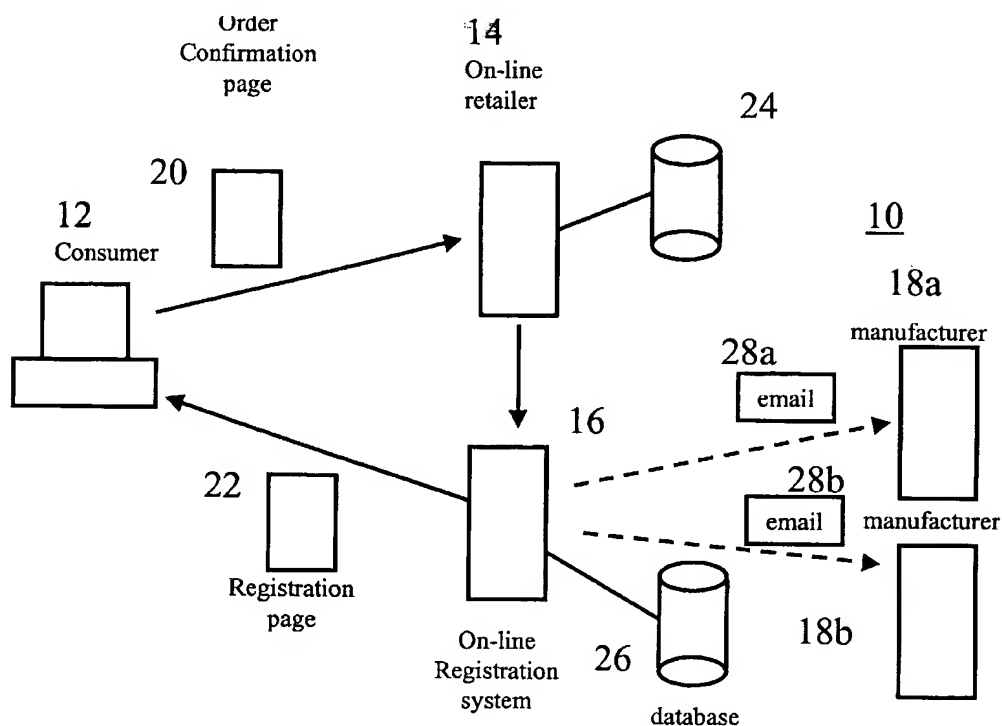
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(21) **Appl. No.: 09/755,968**(22) **Filed: Jan. 5, 2001****Related U.S. Application Data**

(63) **Non-provisional of provisional application No. 60/174,635, filed on Jan. 5, 2000.**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

The invention provides systems and methods that allow retail entities to let consumers register a product or warranty at the point of sale. More specifically, the systems and methods described herein allow a retailer to identify a point during a purchasing transaction wherein the consumer has completed a transaction. At that time, the retailer may presented to the consumer an interface that the consumer may easily complete to allow the consumer to participate in a product or warranty registration process. As such, the systems and methods described here and make the product registration process part of the purchase transaction and therefore make the product registration process seamless and more facile. Consequently it is understood that consumer participation within the product registration process increases.



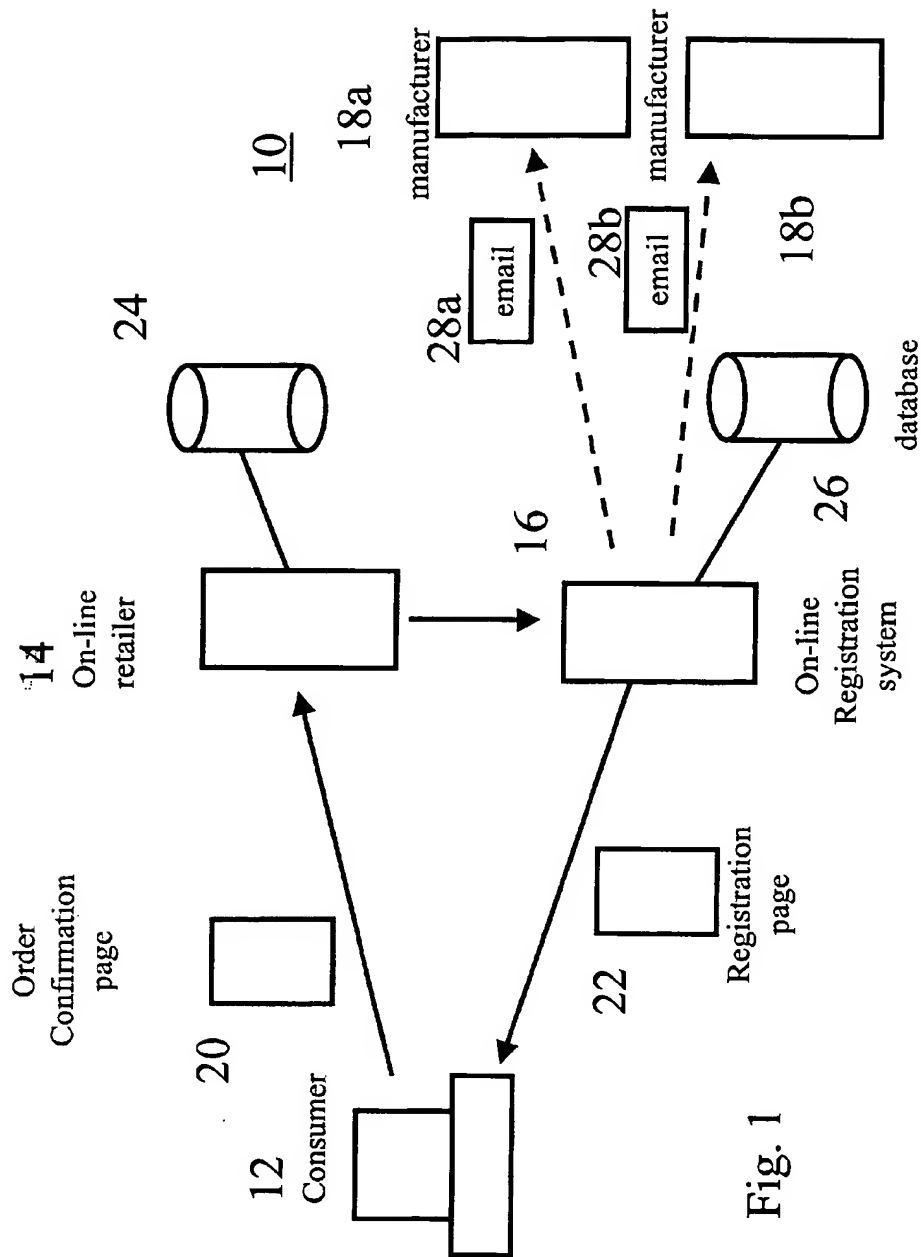


Fig. 1

Billing Information			Shipping Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Click if same																																						
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Mr. <input type="radio"/> Mrs. <input type="radio"/> Ms.			<input checked="" type="radio"/> Mr. <input type="radio"/> Mrs. <input type="radio"/> Ms.																																						
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<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">Item</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">Shipping Method</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">Item #</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">Price</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">Qty</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">MacLaren Sprinter Light Weight Stroller</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Standard Shipping</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">863759</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$188.87</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">MacLeran Day Tripper Stroller</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Standard Shipping</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">24475</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$199.87</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Evenflo Jenny Lind Crib</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Standard Shipping</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">863759</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$129.87</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Evenflo Secure Advantage 1 Car Seat</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Standard Shipping</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">24475</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">\$84.99</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="padding: 5px; text-align: right;">Total</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>						Item	Shipping Method	Item #	Price	Qty	Total	MacLaren Sprinter Light Weight Stroller	Standard Shipping	863759	\$188.87	1		MacLeran Day Tripper Stroller	Standard Shipping	24475	\$199.87	1		Evenflo Jenny Lind Crib	Standard Shipping	863759	\$129.87	1		Evenflo Secure Advantage 1 Car Seat	Standard Shipping	24475	\$84.99	1		Total					
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Figure 2

PRODUCT REGISTRATION

We would appreciate if you would answer the following optional questions to complete your registration.

Level of education completed: ☐ high school ☐ undergraduate ☐ Some graduate
 ☐ graduate ☐ professional

What is your age group? ☐ under 17 ☐ 18 - 24 ☐ 25 - 34
 ☐ 35 - 44 ☐ over 45

What is your marital status? ☐ single ☐ married ☐ divorced

What is your total annual ☐ Under \$30K ☐ \$30K-\$50K ☐ \$50K-\$70K
 Household income? ☐ \$70K-\$90K ☐ \$90K +

How many purchases have ☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-4 ☐ 5-6
 You or someone in your family ☐ 6-8 ☐ 8+
 Made online in the pas year?

cancel
finish

Mfr.	#	Product Name	Product #	Your Info
Maclaren	1	Sprinter Light Weight Stroller	863759	Ibuy Alottastuff
Maclaren	1	Day Tripper Stroller	24475	67 Bay State Road
Evenflo	1	Jenny Lind Crib	863759	Boston, MA 02215
Evenflo	1	Secure Advantage 1 Car Seat	24475	Alotta@aol.com

Figure 3

REGISTRATION CONFIRMATION

Thank You!

Your registration is confirmed. An email confirmation has been sent to you.
Please save or print the following receipt for your records.

Quantity	Products Registered
1	Sprinter Light Weight Stroller
1	Day Tripper Stroller
1	Jenny Lind Crib
1	Secure Advantage 1 Car Seat

close window

Figure 4

As a service of iwannit.com, you may now register your products
With the manufacturer. This will entitle you to many benefits,
Such as:

- >> Online instant registration access
- >> No need to re-enter your contact information
- >> Exclusive offers from manufacturers
- >> Immediate confirmation of warranty registration
- >> Automatic notification of warranty expiration
- >> Timely product recall notification

close this window register

Figure 5

product	Warranty expiration	safety	contest	recall	promotions
phone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
cell	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
email	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
catalog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fig. 6

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR POINT OF PURCHASE PRODUCT REGISTRATION

REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Ser. No. 60/174,635 filed Jan. 5, 2000, entitled Integrated Product Registration for Online Purchases, and naming Sean Brown, as inventor, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The systems and methods described herein relate to systems and methods for selling products and services, and more particularly to systems and methods for allowing a retailer to provide product registration at the point of sale.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Today, to be an effective competitor within the marketplace a company needs as much information about its customers as possible. Manufacturers that create products which are delivered through third party retail distribution channels face the problem that they are somewhat removed from their customer base. Thus, it is often difficult for manufacturers to actually interact, or collect information, about the customers who choose to buy their products. To address this issue, manufacturers commonly employ a product registration or warranty registration process that requests a customer to return a postcard to the manufacturer wherein the postcard contains information about that customer. With the returned postcard, the manufacturer then has some idea about the characteristics, demographics, or other features about the people buying their products.

[0004] Today, product registration is a broken process that provides little value to the manufacturers. For example, the registration process most commonly employed today involves providing within the packaging materials for a new product, a stamped addressed postcard that may be completed by the consumer and returned to the manufacturer through the mail. Although manufacturers strive to make this process as simple and painless as possible, response rates for returning such product and warranty registration cards are notably low. For the millions of products sold to consumers each year, fewer than 10 percent of product cards are ever returned.

[0005] In addition, manufacturers face cost issues and an inefficient process for evaluating the collected information. Processing costs for returned cards can be significant, and turnaround for compiled, usable data may take many months. Because of low response rates and incorrect information, traditional warranty/registration databases are of limited use for either market analysis or for communicating with customers.

[0006] Accordingly, manufacturers need a more efficient and cost-effective mechanism for having customers register their purchased products.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Other objects of the invention will, in part, be obvious, and, in part, be shown from the following description of the systems and methods shown herein.

[0008] The systems and methods described herein provide for allowing retail entities to have consumers register a product or warranty with the associated manufacturer at the point of sale. More specifically, the systems and methods described herein allow a retailer to identify a point during a purchasing transaction wherein the consumer has completed a transaction. At that time, the retailer may present to the consumer a form that the consumer may easily complete to allow the consumer to participate in a product or warranty registration process. As such, the systems and methods described herein make the product registration process part of the purchase transaction and therefore make the product registration process seamless and more facile. Consequently it is understood that consumer participation within the product registration process increases.

[0009] More particularly, the systems and methods described herein include methods for product registration that comprise providing an online site for purchasing a product, providing an online registration form for registering the purchased product, identifying during the purchase transaction a completion point representative of when the purchase is complete, and displaying the online registration form subsequent to completion point for allowing a user to register a product, warranty, or other manufacturer provided incentive.

[0010] Registration can include the act of identifying to a manufacturer an interest in receiving information about a product, a product recall, a safety notice, opportunities to purchase an extended warranty or the expiration of an existing warranty, proof of purchase for insurance purposes, and online manuals. The opportunity to quickly and easily register products purchased at an online site allows for more facile management of assets. This is particularly important to small businesses as small businesses need to create inventories of the products and goods they own for insurance purposes.

[0011] The term registration or the term registration process will be understood to encompass the collection of data from consumers after the purchase of a product, service or other item from a business. These terms shall include, but not be limited to, registration processes wherein information is collected from a consumer about a purchased product or service and that information is delivered to the manufacturer or provider of that service for purposes of receiving warranty protection, extended warranty protection, product recall information, products safety information, to receive promotional information, or for any other purpose. Moreover, it will be understood that the terms registration and registration process do not require the delivery of consumer information to a manufacturer or other provider of good or services.

[0012] In certain optional practices the systems and methods described herein may be employed for providing an online site wherein the online site includes a server for purchasing products from a plurality of manufacturers, and wherein providing an online registration form includes associating the online registration form with one of the plurality of manufacturers.

[0013] The systems may also include a step of aggregating product registration data for determining the purchasing behavior of the consumer. Additionally, the practices will allow for employing product registration data for providing

to a consumer information associated with a product that consumer has purchased. The information associated with a product may include information about a product recall, a warranty expiration, information about similar products, such as sales incentives on those similar products, and a survey form for collecting consumer satisfaction information.

[0014] In another practice, the methods described herein may include methods for allowing a retail site to provide online product registration, wherein in these methods comprise identifying products that are sold on the retail site and that may be registered online, providing for each product a registration requirement list representative of information to be collected from a consumer for registering the product with an associated manufacturer. The method may also include tracking purchases made by a consumer on the retail site that can be registered online, generating for the tracked purchases, a product registration page capable of prompting the consumer to enter information identified in the registration requirement list for each tracked purchase, and generating for each tracked purchase a product registration request having information capable of registering the product with the respective manufacturer.

[0015] In this practice, the methods may also include employing the registration information for each tracked purchase to generate a database representative of purchase activity of the consumer. Additionally the practices may include allowing a manufacturer to employ the registration information for a product manufactured by the manufacturer to deliver an e-mail advertisements for a product to a consumer. Optionally the e-mail advertisements may include a link to a retail site offering a product for sale and the e-mail advertisements may include a purchased incentive where a portion of the incentive is underwritten by the retail site and a portion of the incentive is underwritten by the manufacturer.

[0016] In a further aspect, the methods described herein may include a service for providing online retail sites with point of purchase product registration, comprising providing each online retail site with a link to a server for supporting online product registration, detecting activation of the link and delivering to the server information representative of products selected for registration, for each selected product, identifying a registration requirement list representative of information to be provided for registering the product with an associated manufacturer, generating a product registration page for prompting the consumer to enter information identified in each registration requirement list, and generating for the selected products a registration request having information capable of registering selected products with respective associated manufacturers.

[0017] In a further aspect, the invention may be understood as systems for allowing a retail site to offer a consumer the opportunity to register a product worksheet or other incentive at the point of purchase. These systems may include a server capable of receiving information from the retail site, and processing that information to determine the products purchased at that site for which the server has an entry in a database indicating that product registration information is available for that product. The server further includes a page generator for generating a web page that may be provided to the consumer for collecting from the

consumer information that is to be provided to a manufacturer during the product or warranty registration process. Information returned from the consumer may be processed by the server to generate and e-mail registration notice that may be delivered to the manufacturer. The server may also receive confirmation from the manufacturer that the product has been registered, and confirmation of that registration may be forwarded from the server to the consumer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] The foregoing and other objects and advantages of the invention will be appreciated more fully from the following further description thereof, with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein;

[0019] FIG. 1 depicts schematically one system according to the invention;

[0020] FIGS. 2-5 depict the operation of a system;

[0021] FIG. 6 depicts a user interface for allowing a consumer to select a mechanism to receive notifications;

DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLUSTRATED EMBODIMENTS

[0022] To provide an overall understanding of the invention, certain illustrative embodiments will now be described. However, it will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that the systems and methods described herein can be adapted and modified for other suitable applications and that such other additions and modifications will not depart from the scope hereof. For example, it will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that the systems and methods described herein may be employed for purchasing products from a conventional "brick and mortar" retailer. For example, the conventional retailer may be equipped with a cash register that includes an LCD display. Upon completion of a purchase transaction, the LCD display may present to a consumer a web page that queries the consumer whether the consumer wishes to register a product. If the consumer wishes to register a product, the consumer may enter the information, either by completing the web page by keyboard entry, touchpad control, beaming information from a personal digital assistant, responding to an e-mail sent from the retailer or through any other technique. Once the information is provided to complete the web page, the information may be delivered to the registration server for the generation of an e-mail registration notice that may be delivered to the manufacturer. Still other embodiments of the systems and methods described herein may be realized without departing from the scope of the invention.

[0023] FIG. 1 presents a system 10 according to the invention wherein the system 10 allows a consumer purchasing goods from an online retailer to register products during the purchase transaction, and accordingly depicts the system wherein an online retailer is capable of allowing a consumer to register a product during a purchasing transaction. More specifically, FIG. 1 depicts a system 10 wherein there is presented a consumer 12, an online retailer 14, an online registration system 16, a plurality of manufacturers, shown as 18A and 18B. FIG. 1 further depicts that the online retailer 14 and online registration system 16 may present to the consumer 12 information, shown in FIG. 1 as conventional Web pages 20 and 22, that allow the consumer to confirm an order to purchase goods and to register a product.

[0024] Additionally FIG. 1 depicts that the online registration system 16 may deliver e-mail registration notifications 28A and 28B to the manufacturers 18A and 18B, respectively. FIG. 1 further shows that the online registration system 16 may include a database 26 wherein consumer data collected during registration activities is aggregated for later use. A database 24 is also shown, and may optionally be included as part of the online retailer site 14.

[0025] As shown in FIG. 1, a consumer 12 may access an online retailer 14 for purchasing goods and products from that online retailer 14. During the purchasing transaction, the online retailer may presented to the consumer 12 and order confirmation page that the consumer can activate, typically by clicking a control on page designated as "accepted" or "submits". Once activated the confirmation page indicates to the online retailer 14 that the consumer has completed the purchasing transaction. The online retailer 14 may designate this point as the completion point for the transaction and at that time may present to the consumer 12 a web page that queries the consumer 12 as to whether they wish to register any of the products they have just purchased. As shown in FIG. 1, in the illustrated practice, this is accomplished by having the online retailer 14 identify this point of completion. Once the point of completion has occurred, the retailer 14 may send a message to the online registration system 16 that consumer 12 wishes to register a purchased product. As shown in FIG. 1, the online registration system 16 receives the request from the online retailer 14 and presents the registration page 22 to the consumer 12, as will be described in more detail herein. The consumer 12 may interact with the online retailer 16 to register those products that have been purchased from the online retailer 14 and for which the online Registration system 16 provides registration services.

[0026] As further shown in FIG. 1, once the consumer 12 has provided the online registration system 16 with sufficient information to complete the registration process, the online Registration system 16 may generate e-mail registration notifications, such notifications being depicted in FIG. 1 as e-mail notifications 28A and 28B. The e-mail notifications are delivered to the respective manufacturers, 18A and 18B, and the products are deemed registered. Optionally, as again will be described below the manufacturers 18 A and 18B may acknowledge the registration of these products to the online registration system 16, that may, in turn, provide the consumer 12 with acknowledgment that the product registration process has been completed and accepted by the manufacturer.

[0027] For the depicted system 10, the consumer 12 may comprise a conventional client system that can be any suitable computer system such as a PC workstation, a handheld computing device, a wireless communication device, a network appliance or any other such device, equipped with a network client capable of accessing a network server and interacting with a server to exchange information with the server. For those alternative embodiments wherein the system is embedded within a retail device, such as a cash register, the data processing system 12 may be absent, or considered to be part of a micro-controller system embedded into the cash register that can access the registration server 16.

[0028] In the depicted embodiment, the client 12 is a web client, such as a web browser that can include the Netscape

web browser, the Microsoft Internet explorer web browser, the Lynx web browser, or a proprietary web browser, or web client that allows the user to exchange data with a web server, and ftp server, a gopher server, or some other type of network server. Optionally, the client and the server rely on an unsecured communication path, such as the Internet, for accessing services on the remote server. To add security to such a communication path, the client and the server can employ a security system, such as any of the conventional security systems that have been developed to provide to the remote user a secured channel for transmitting data over the Internet. One such system is the Netscape secured socket layer (SSL) security mechanism that provides to a remote user a trusted path between a conventional web browser program and a web server. Therefore, optionally and preferably, the client system 12 and the on-line retailer server system 14 have built in 128 bit or 40 bit SSL capability and can establish an SSL communication channel between the clients 12 and the server 14. Other security systems can be employed, such as those described in Bruce Schneier, *Applied Cryptography* (Addison-Wesley 1996). Alternatively, the systems may employ, at least in part, secure communication paths for transferring information between the server and the client. For purpose of illustration however, the systems described herein, including the system 10 depicted in FIG. 1 will be understood to employ a public channel, such as an Internet connection through an ISP or any suitable connection, to connect the subscriber systems 12 and the server 14.

[0029] The on-line retailer 14, in the depicted embodiment, comprises a server 14 that may be supported by a commercially available server platform such as a Sun Sparc™ system running a version of the Unix operating system and running a server capable of connecting with, or exchanging data with, one of the subscriber systems 12. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the server 14 includes a web server, such as the Apache web server or any suitable web server. The web server component of the server 14 acts to listen for requests from consumer systems 12, and in response to such a request, resolves the request to identify a filename, script, dynamically generated data that can be associated with that request and to return the identified data to the requesting consumer system 12. The operation of the web server component of server 14 can be understood more fully from Laurie et al., *Apache The Definitive Guide*, O'Reilly Press (1997). The server 14 may also include components that extend its operation to accomplish the retail transactions described herein, and the architecture of the server 14 may vary according to the application.

[0030] The server 14 may couple to a database 16 that stores information representative of a consumer's account, including information about the different products the consumer has purchased. The depicted database 16 may comprise any suitable database system, including the commercially available Microsoft Access database, and can be a local or distributed database system. The design and development of database systems suitable for use with the system 10, follow from principles known in the art, including those described in McGovern et al., *A Guide To Sybase and SQL Server*, Addison-Wesley (1993). The database 12 can be supported by any suitable persistent data memory, such as a hard disk drive, RAID system, tape drive system, floppy diskette, or any other suitable system. The system 10 depicted in FIG. 1 includes a database device that is separate from the server station platform 14, however, it will be

understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that in other embodiments the database device 16 can be integrated into the server 14.

[0031] Turning again to FIG. 1, it may be seen that the online registration system 16 acts as a middleware device for products sold by an online retailer. To this end, the online registration system 16 includes a database 26 that stores information about the product registration information required for registering a product, warranty, or other incentive from a manufacturer. The online registration system 16 builds the database 16 by contacting different manufacturers, such as depicted manufacturers 18A and 18B. For example, the online registration system 16 may be operated as a service that will contact different manufacturers of consumer goods, for example Sony, Firestone, Evenflo, MacLeran, or any other manufacturer. By contacting these manufacturers, the online registration service may develop a database 26 that includes a plurality of data records wherein each data record is associated with a product provided by a manufacturer. Each respective record may include a registration requirements list representative of the information that is to be collected from a consumer for registering that product with associated manufacturer. This information may be provided by any source. For example, for those online retail sites that collect information from a consumer, such as name, address, telephone number, another information useful for delivering products from the retailer to the consumer, the basic demographic information for completing the product registration process may be provided by the online retail site. Similarly, the online Registration system 16 may employ cookies or other state information management systems, for pre-populating a registration page that is to be presented to a consumer. Accordingly, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that any technique suitable for collecting information for completing the product registration process may be practiced with the systems and methods described around without departing from the scope thereof.

[0032] Table 1 presents one example of a data record of the type that may be stored within a database 26.

Product ID	Manufacturer ID	Req Info 1
		Req Info 2
		Req Info 3
		Req Info 4
		Req Info 5

[0033] As can be seen from table 1, the data record includes a product number, a manufacturer identification code, and a set of fields, which are representative of the information that is to be provided during the registration process. The database 26 may store a plurality of such records. However, it will be understood that any table structure, data model, or other arrangement of data may be employed by the system 10 for storing product registration information, without departing from the scope of the invention.

[0034] The data records stored at the online registration system site and may be accessed by the online retailer 14. In one practice, the online retailer 14 provides to a consumer 12 a page having a control that allows the consumer 12 to link

to the online registration system 16. Upon activation of the online registration system 16 the online retailer 14 makes the request, such as a conventional hypertext transfer protocol request, to the Web server executing at the online registration system site 16. The request can include information that is representative of the product purchased by the consumer 12 at the online retailer site 14. This information may include the product identification codes (described in Table 1) employed by the online Registration system 16 for identifying products within its database 26. However, it will be understood that any suitable type of product identifier may be employed.

[0035] FIG. 2 depicts one example of a Web order confirmation page 20 that may be completed by a consumer 12 and delivered to the online retailer 14 during a purchase transaction. As shown in FIG. 2, a control "submit your order" is provided to the consumer 12. Upon activation of this control, the information present in the order confirmation page is delivered to the server of the online retailer 14. At this point the online retailer 14 identifies the transaction as completed. The online retailer 14 may then make a request to the online registration system 16. The request may comprise, as discussed above a conventional hypertext transfer protocol request, that directs the Web server of the online registration system 16 to deliver to the consumer 12 a web page that queries the consumer 12 as to whether or the consumer 12 wishes to register any of the products purchased on the online retailer site 14 which have been identified within the database 26 has been products which can be registered through the online registration system 16. In this operation, the WebServer for the online registration system 16 may receive with the request the product identification code's provided by the online retailer 14. In one practice, the product identification code are representative of uniform product identification codes provided by the manufacturer to identify the particular goods. The online Registration system 16 may cross reference the collected product identification codes against those product identification code's stored its database 26. In an optional alternative practice, the online registration system 16 may also directly query the manufacturers 18A or 18B to whether they have a registration data record for a product identified by the online retailer 14.

[0036] If the online registration system 16 determines that one or more products may be registered through its site, then the online registration system 16 may presents a query screen, such as the query screen depicted in FIG. 3 to the consumer 12. The query screen may query the consumer 12 as to whether they wish to register, one or more of the purchased products. If the consumer 12 wishes to register a product, the consumer may activate the depicted "register" control. Upon activation of the control, the online registration system 16 may deliver to the consumer 12 a product registration page such as the depicted product registration page 22. One such product registration page is depicted in more detail in FIG. 4.

[0037] This registration page collects from the consumer information about the consumer including their level of education, age group, marital status, and other such demographic information. Once the information has been collected from the consumer 12, the consumer may activate the "finish" control. The information entered by the consumer 12 is then delivered to the online Registration system 16.

The online registration system 16 may then generate the e-mail messages 28A and 28B each of which may be delivered to a respective manufacturer. The e-mail registration notification 28 may be received by the manufacturer 18 and the manufacturer 18 may register the purchased product. In an alternative embodiment, the online registration system 16 may generate a data record indicating that the consumer 12 as a register that particular product purchased from sites 14. The generated data record may later be delivered any patch process to the appropriate manufacturers. Still other techniques for notifying the respective manufacturers 18A and 18B that the product has been registered may be employed without departing from scope of the invention.

[0038] Once the registration has been completed, the online registration system 16 may generate a confirmation page for delivery to the consumer 12. One such confirmation page is depicted in FIG. 5. Once registration has been confirmed, the process terminates.

[0039] Described above with reference to FIGS. 1 through 6 the online registration system 16 is supported by a service that the first creates an agreement with a manufacturer that the manufacturer will allow that service to register products produced by that manufacturer. However, the registration service may operate in other ways including first approaching retail sites and working with those retail sites to allow for the products sold on and site to be registered. Once a consumer registers products purchased at a site, the registration service then creates a database of products from different manufacturers that have been registered. The service may then approach the respective manufacturers and ask them whether they are interested in purchasing the registration information that has been collected for that manufacturer's products. In still other practices, the systems and methods described above may be proprietary and employed by a retail service for allowing consumers on that service to register products purchased from that site.

[0040] Alternatively, the systems and methods described herein may be provided as part of a suite of services that support consumer transactions. For example, customer support services that provide online user manuals, credit verification, and other such services may employ the systems and methods described here as part of that suite of services. Additionally, businesses that collect and analyze data relating to consumer behavior may also employ the systems and methods described here for collecting information about consumer purchases.

[0041] The systems and methods described above provide for the collection of valuable consumer data that may be employed for a plurality of reasons including marketing programs wherein specific types of consumers are targeted by particular manufacturers, and other such applications. For example, the online registration system 16 may develop the database 26 to include data about the purchases made by various consumers care in the information contained in this database is valuable for both people who purchased products as well as the businesses that sell products to consumers. To this end, the system 16 depicted above may include a process, such as a computer program executed on the server supporting the registration system 16, tell us a consumer to review the products that the consumer has registered. To this end, a buy file may be generated by the registration system 16 each time a new consumer registers a product. The buy

file may be updated each time a consumer purchases additional products or services and registers those products or services.

[0042] In one practice upon receiving the confirmation of having registered a product, a consumer 12 may be provided with a password. With its password, the consumer may subsequently access the online registration system 16 directly. The consumer may then access their buy file by entering the password at that site. The buy file may contain information about the purchases the consumer has made and registered. For example, the buy file may include a list of all products purchased by that consumer, and the manufacturers that provide the product. Additionally the buy file may include information about the time and date of purchase, the site from which the product was purchased, the expiration date of any warranties provided with the products, contact information for reaching the manufacturer of the products, online manuals that show how the products work, information about resale information, such as a link to a site that indicates the present value of the product on a web auction site, and any other type of information that may be of interest to the consumer to see about the products they purchased. It is a realization of the invention, that the buy file acts as an asset management tool for allowing an individual or business to see the products they have purchased. Such an asset management tool is quite helpful for small businesses where the organization and inventorying of products and services is important for a number of reasons, including insurance purposes.

[0043] Additionally, in an optional embodiment each buy file may include information for each consumer or product purchased by that consumer that indicates the consumers willingness to receive information associated with that product. For example, FIG. 6 depicts one user interface that may be provided to consumer 12 for allowing the consumer to control, typically at the consumers option, to receive different types of notification and promotional literature for the different products purchased by that consumer. More specifically, FIG. 6 depicts a user interface 32 that is set up as an array of radio buttons 34 each of which may be a hypertext markup language control, or any other suitable type of control, that consumer 12 may activate. As can be seen from FIG. 6, the array of radio buttons 34 is provided for a particular product. Additionally, the array of radio buttons 34 allows the consumer to select for each type of possible event, such as the expiration of a warranty, a safety notification from a manufacturer, or government agency, a contest, a product recall, or a sales promotion, the type of solicitation the consumer will except. For example at a consumer's option, a consumer can choose not select any type of means for being solicited. Accordingly, the default of the radio buttons 34 is opt out the consumer 12 from receiving any solicitation. However at the consumer's option, the consumer may for example to receive warranty expiration information or notification by e-mail. A further example may be that the consumer will except recall notifications by telephone including by Mobil cellular telephone. Accordingly, the system 16 may allow a consumer to control how information is delivered to the consumer for particular product. The user interface 32 may be presented to the consumer 12 at the time of product registration, or alternatively at the time to consumer launched into the registration system 16 to view their buy file.

[0044] In the illustration of FIG. 6 each product is provided with an array of radio buttons 34. However in other practices, the consumer may be required to select a level of notification for all notification types for all products. Further optionally the consumer may be allowed to change the notification methods at any time. In a further practice, a manufacturer may be allowed to set a required level of notification for certain events. For example the Firestone tire company may require that any products purchased through a web site include a registration process wherein a user provides an e-mail address, and the user has to allow recall information to be delivered by e-mail to that consumer. Other mechanisms for controlling, modifying or adding to be control a notification information may be practice and the alternative practices will depend upon the particular application.

[0045] In one particular implementation, the online registration system 16 supports consumers access to the consumer data by providing a Web server platform that the consumer 12 may access. The WebServer may be conventional WebServer such as those developed with the cold fusion web site development tool from the Allaire Corp. of Cambridge MA. Data stored within the buy file's may be maintained within an Oracle database organized into a plurality of tables. The development of the tables, the data models, or the underlying schema made area according to the application in any suitable organization of tables may be employed for example tables may be organized to provide tables for each consumer, each manufacturer, each product, or any other way that suits the particular application. The development of such tables and databases is now to those of skill in the art in the use of such databases does not apart from the scope of the invention.

[0046] In a further embodiment, the registration system 16 may provide a database and WebServer mechanism that allows a manufacturer such as the illustrated manufacturers 18a and 18b, to query the database 26 of consumer information to develop a marketing program. For example, the registration system 16 may provide a database and server mechanism that allows a manufacturer to query the tables within the database to identify consumers having certain demographics. Optionally, and preferably, the manufacturer is given access to only certain nonconfidential, anonymous, or non-identity information within the database. Thus the manufacturer is prevented from accessing or viewing identity information such as names, addresses, and other such information. However, a manufacturer may be allowed to access information about geographic location of consumers, products purchased by consumers, online retail services used by consumers, and other such demographic information. The online retailer may develop a query to segment a database and identify that portion of consumers within the database 26 that meet certain demographic requirements. The manufacturer may request that the online registration system 16 conduct an e-mail marketing campaign that delivers an e-mail, typically developed by the manufacturer, to each of the targeted customers having the selected demographic qualities. In this way, the manufacturer 18a or 18b may conduct a targeted marketing campaign without getting identity information about the targeted customers. As discussed above, the e-mail marketing campaign may optionally include promotions, incentives, and other such information that can be delivered to consumer. For example, the marketing campaign may allow for delivering a coupon to

the consumer. The coupon may require the consumer to return to the retail side where a product from the manufacturer was already purchased. At that site, the manufacturer may be willing to underwrite a 20 percent discount on a product from that manufacturer. As the manufacturer is providing coupons that drives traffic to the retailer site, the retailer may also be willing to underwrite the coupon for a selected portion. In this way, the manufacturer and retailer may conduct cooperative marketing campaigns.

[0047] As discussed above, the registration server 16 mechanism can be realized as software operating on a conventional data processing system such as a Unix workstation. In that embodiment, the registration server 16 mechanism can be implemented as a C language computer program, or a computer program written in any high level language including C++, Fortran, Java or basic. Additionally, in an embodiment where microcontrollers or DSPs are employed, the registration server 16 can be realized as a computer program written in microcode or written in a high level language and compiled down to microcode that can be executed on the platform employed. General techniques for high level programming are known, and set forth in, for example, Stephen G. Kochan, Programming in C, Hayden Publishing (1983).

[0048] Those skilled in the art will know or be able to ascertain using no more than routine experimentation, many equivalents to the embodiments and practices described herein. For example, it is a realization of the present invention that by providing a product registration system that is more facile, product registration may also be offered as a service provided with products in services that conventionally are not registered. Such products and services may include music compact discs, groceries, dry cleaning, restaurants, or any other type of good or service provided by a business that will benefit from a system that collects information about their customers. Accordingly, it will be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the embodiments disclosed herein, but is to be understood from the following claims, which are to be interpreted as broadly as allowed under the law.

I claim:

1. A method for product registration, comprising:
 - providing an on-line site for purchasing a product,
 - providing an on-line registration form for registering the purchased product,
 - identifying during the purchase transaction a completion point representative of when the purchase is complete, and
 - displaying the on-line registration form subsequent to the completion for allowing a user to register.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein:
 - providing an on-line site includes providing an on-line site for purchasing products from a plurality of manufacturers, and wherein,
 - providing an on-line registration form includes associating the on-line registration form with one of the plurality of manufacturers.

3. A method according to claim 1, further comprising:
aggregating product registration data for determining purchasing behavior of a user.
4. A method according to claim 1, further comprising:
employing product registration data for providing information associated with the product to a user.
5. A method according to claim 4, wherein the information associated with the product includes information about a product recall.
6. A method according to claim 4, wherein the information associated with the product includes information about warranty expiration.
7. A method according to claim 4, wherein the information associated with the product includes information about similar products.
8. A method according to claim 4, wherein the information associated with the product includes a survey form for collecting customer satisfaction information.
9. A method for allowing a retail site to provide on-line product registration, comprising
identifying products sold on the retail site that can be registered on-line,
providing for each product, a registration requirement list representative of information to be collected from a consumer for registering the product with an associated manufacturer,
tracking purchases made by a consumer on the retail site that can be registered on-line,
generating for the tracked purchases a product registration page capable of prompting the consumer to enter information identified in the registration requirement list for each tracked purchase, and
generating for each tracked purchase a product registration request having information capable of registering the product with the respective manufacturer.
10. A method according to claim 9, further comprising
employing the registration information for each tracked purchase to generate a database representative of purchase activity of a consumer.
11. A method according to claim 9, further comprising
allowing a manufacturer to employ the registration information for a product manufactured by that manufacturer to deliver an e-mail advertisement for a product to a consumer.
12. A method according to claim 11, wherein the e-mail advertisement includes a link to a retail site offering the product for sale.
13. A method according to claim 11, wherein the e-mail advertisement includes a purchase incentive wherein a portion of the incentive is underwritten by the retail site and a portion of the incentive is underwritten by the manufacturer.
14. A service for providing on-line retail sites with point-of-purchase product registration, comprising
providing each on-line retail site with a link to a server for supporting on-line product registration,
detecting activation of the link and delivering to the server information representative of products selected for registration,
for each selected product, identifying a registration requirement list representative of information to be provided for registering the product with an associated manufacturer,
generating a product registration page for prompting the consumer to enter information identified in each registration requirement list, and
generating for the selected products a registration request having information capable of registering selected products with respective associated manufacturers.

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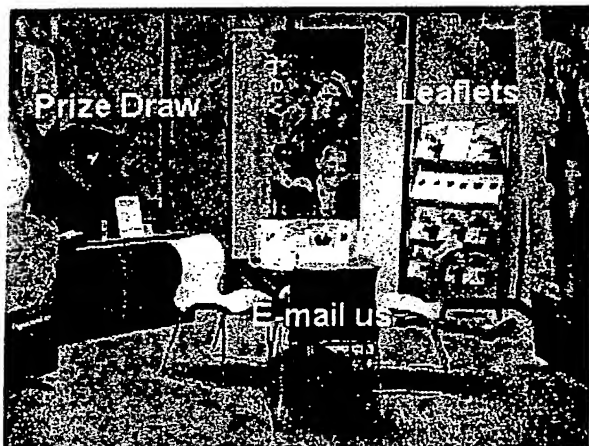
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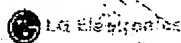
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The Zurich Warranty Management Services team were represented at the show by -

(from top left) Linda Fisher (*Marketing and Sales*), Roy Lewis (*Associate Sales Director*), Brendon Dawson (*Business Development Director*), Joanne Colesell (*Account Manager*) and Mike Springer (*Sales and Marketing Director*).

About us

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Care Four (UK) Ltd., Technology House, Lissadel Street, Salford, Manchester, United Kingdom, M6 6AP

Company Registration

(England and Wales) No - 3805663

Contact details

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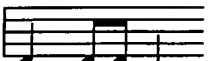
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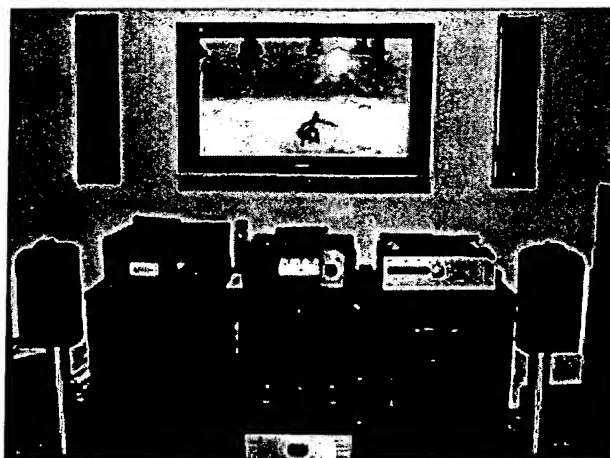
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May 5 - Free Java Games

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Want 12 FREE CDs? It's easy! Just check out PLAY from Columbia House. You can take 12 FREE CDs from our online catalog of over 16,000 albums when you join the Club. Plus, get 2 MORE FREE when you take a 13th for only \$6.95. Click here for details and start choosing your FREE CDs now!
<http://www.columbiahouse.com/gateway?token=5290>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Java Games- Here's a good way to pass the time. Brainblitz has a very well rounded collection of multi-player games that use java so they can be played right in your browser as long as you have a java enabled browser as most recent browsers are!

All games are multi-player so you can compete against other players over the internet. All of the games are well organized in several different categories including adventure, action, and sports to name a few.

This site also has some other fun stuff like trivia tests, love quizzes, IQ tests, and personality tests as well as comics and cartoons.

Visit <http://www.brainblitz.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Cesar Select Dinner For Dogs (U.S only)
<http://www.petsource.com/cesar/free.htm>

Free 30 Minute Phone Card (U.S only)
 (link is on the right)
<http://www.getconnected.com/index.asp>

Free Car (U.S only)

(very interesting, fill out application, in order to read details..this site uses Shockwave which can be downloaded at their web site)
<http://www.myfreecar.com/application/>

Free Online Puzzles (international)
<http://www.bitsandpieces.com/arcade.asp>

-----SPONSOR-----

Play One of the Most Addictive Games on the Internet!

Visit SpeedyClick at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/speedy>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 6 - 7 - Not Published On Weekends

May 8 - Free Emergency Notifications

-----SPONSOR-----

In the next few seconds you could become \$100,000 richer! Play the new Scratch-4-Cash game at Webstakes.com and find out instantly if you're a winner. Over a thousand game cards have instant cash prizes and you can play everyday!
<http://www.clk4.com/cgi-bin/conv.pl?5548>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Emergency Notifications - Here's a cool service that will send you live breaking news directly to your alpha-numeric pager or email address 24 hours a day, 365 days a year! You will receive information on major police, fire, and rescue operations as they are happening!

This company has dispatchers all over the country to keep an eye on all of the major events, so they can keep you updated via email or pager. Although they offer different levels of service, they will notify you of all major events in your local area for free.

They also have a few extras like a "late breaking news ticker" which can be downloaded from their web site, so that you can have the latest news delivered to your desktop while you surf the web.

Also, if you own at least one radio scanner, you can even volunteer as a dispatcher. It looks like this service is only available in the U.S right now!

Visit <http://www.incidentpage.net/>

Other Freebies

Free Sample Pack of Stickers and Full Colour Cards (U.S only)
<http://www.getclubcards.com/freesamples.htm>

Free Sample of Total Effects Moisturizer (U.S only)
http://www.total-effects.com/10_saForm.shtml

Free Dog and Cat Treats (international)
<http://offers.purina.com/guestbook/guestbook.asp?prog=treats>

Free Headache Pain Management Kit (U.S only)
http://www.motrin.com/products/migraine/migraine_kit.htm

-----SPONSOR-----

Get Free Email Newsletters on the Topics That Interest You!

Sign Up For At Least One Newsletter and Win \$50,000!

Visit BackWire at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/backwire>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 9 - Free Guessing Game

-----SPONSOR-----

GET 60% OFF A SPRING/SUMMER GET AWAY !!! How does \$198.00 sound? That's for the whole family. Not per person or per night. That's for two adults and up to two children in Orlando for 5 days and 4 nights PLUS attraction tickets !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! To register to receive more information, please go to
<http://www.takeme2orlando.com/registration5.html>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Guessing Game - Here's a fun game that anyone can play right inside their browser. To play, pretend to be a world famous dictator or television sitcom star, and then answer the simple

"yes" or "no" questions, and the computer will try to guess who you are pretending to be.

The games works right inside your browser and doesn't appear to use any fancy programming, so anyone should be able to play it!

Visit <http://www.smalltime.com/nowhere/dictator/>

Other Freebies

Free Sample Of Double Chocolate Chunk Rice Krispy Treat (U.S only)

<http://promote.station.sony.com/kellogg/sample.html>

Free Weather Conditions From Your Desktop (international)

<http://www.weatherbug.com>

Send A Free Mother's Day Card (U.S Only)

(link is in top left corner)

<http://www.cardstore.com/>

Free One Year Subscription to Education World Magazine (U.S Only)

<http://www.education-world.com/magazine/subscribe.shtml>

-----SPONSOR-----

Get Paid To Read Email!

Visit Send More Info at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/send>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 10 - Free Warranties

-----SPONSOR-----

Play The Free Online Instant Lottery And Win 1 Million Dollars!

Pick 7 Numbers And Find Out Instantly If You Are A Winner!

Play Money Balls at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/balls>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Warranties - Here's a great service from Consumer Spot, a

new online service that is currently still in beta. They offer you free extended warranties on any electronics, computer purchases, or home appliances. These warranties are in addition to any manufacturer warranties that already come with any particular product you have bought.

Consumer Spot is not an ecommerce site...they do not sell anything! You can purchase the products you want to protect from any online or offline stores! In order to receive the free warranties that this site offers, all you have to do is register the products at their web site using the web based, password protected interface at their site.

Here are the three basic services offered at this site...

Double Warranty - actually doubles the length of your original warranty, up to \$10,000 per occurrence and \$50,000 a year! All you have to do is register the product before the original warranty expires.

Extended Return - offers a refund on all products you purchased up to \$250.00 per occurrence and \$1,000 a year. Just make sure you register the product 90 days from the date of purchase. This is great in case the product you purchased has a no-return policy, you will be able to use this service.

Replacement Assurance- protects the products you have purchased from theft, loss, and damage up to 90 days from the date of purchase. Protects up to \$1,000 per occurrence and \$50,000 per year.

Visit <http://www.freewarranty.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Pet Weight Loss Kit (U.S Only)
http://www.fitandtrim.com/product_info/FREEKit.htm

Free Color Printer For Businesses Only (U.S Only)
<http://www.freecolorprinters.com/>

Free Gift For Seafood Lovers (U.S Only)
<http://www.farm-2-market.com/club.html>

Free Carvel Ice Cream Coupon (international)
http://www.carvel.com/coupon_thanks.asp

-----SPONSOR-----
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Print Free Coupons From Your Computer!

Visit CoolSavings at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/cool>

-----SPONSOR-----
-

May 11 - Free Online Training

-----SPONSOR-----

Play Bingo, Chess, Card Games and More For Free!

There are 15 Different Games to Choose From!

Visit Excite Games at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/games>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Online Training - Here's a great site to help you brush up on your computer skills. This site offers 100% free online courses - over 200 to be exact! The courses are mainly geared toward training with specific software and operating systems, but they also have courses in time management, people skills, etc.

Even though this web site seems to be geared toward professionals, it contains a lot of info that anyone will find helpful. There are no registrations required. In order to read the course material, you must have Adobe Acrobat installed on your computer, which can be downloaded at their site for free.

Visit <http://www.freescills.com>

Other Freebies

7 Free Video Rentals From NetFlix and 1 Issue of Space Magazine
(international)
<http://www.space.com/registration/index.php3>

Free Gift (international)
<http://www.alwaysinstyle.com>

Free Mission Impossible 2 Soundtrack CD or Movie Ticket (U.S Only)
(100,000 to be given away - 50,000 CD's and 50,000 Movie Tickets)
(link is in the top right corner)
<http://www.streamsearch.com/homepage.asp>

Free Movie Screensavers (international)
<http://www.joblo.com/moviescreensavers.htm>

-----SPONSOR-----

Stay on Top of the Best Travel Deals Each Week Via Email!

Visit Smarter Living at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/smarter>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 12 - Free Regis Philbin Game

-----SPONSOR-----

Social Net - The Best Place to Meet Local People in Your Area!

Visit Social Net at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/social>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Regis Philbin Game - Here's a cool, little game that should provide a few minutes of fun. The object of the game is to "smash regis" with your choice of five different objects -including his very own co-host Kathie Lee.

Basically, you are a stork with five different kinds of objects to drop on top of Regis, who is moving around at the bottom of the screen. The five objects you have at your disposal are the hello kitty cartoon, Kathie Lee, Andre the Giant, a bag of cash, or a box of better cheddars. There are three different skill levels, and there is basically no point to the game except for a little fun.

In order to play the game, you must have Shockwave installed on your computer, which can be downloaded at their web site for free!

Visit <http://www.smashregis.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Silk Plant (U.S Only)
<http://www.silkgreenhouse.com/>

Free \$5.00 Coupon for Precision Tune Oil Change (U.S Only)
<http://www.precision-tune.com/coupon.html>

Free Paging Service (U.S Only)
(offer does require that you purchase your pager from them, you can also trade in your old pager for their brand new one and get a \$20.00 rebate; paging service is free because it is ad supported)
<http://totallyfreepaging.com/>

Free Pizza Hut Coupons (U.S Only)
<http://www.pizzahut.com/theedgeoffer/>

-----SPONSOR-----

Have You Ever Wondered What Makes the Refridgerator Cold?

Visit How Stuff Works- The Site That Solves Life's Mysteries!

Visit How Stuff Works at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/how>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 13 - 14 - Not Published On Weekends

May 15 - Free Auto Wraps

-----SPONSOR-----

Epinions is the Unbiased Consumer Guide!

Write Reviews and Get Paid Cash When Others Read Them!

Visit Epinions at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/epinions>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Auto Wraps - Well, just in case you ever dreamed of being a driving billboard for Yahoo or some other major corperation, this might be your best chance..

Advertisers will pay you every month to display their advertisements on your car. If you don't mind your car being completely covered with a vinyl adhesive, you could make as much as \$400.00 just driving your car like you always do. They also have smaller pay scales which do not require as much advertising space on your car.

In order to qualify for this service, you must meet certain minimum requirements such as driving at least 1000 miles each month, and no speeding ticket within the last 12 months just to name a few. They will also give you a global positioning system which plugs in to your cigarette lighter to make sure you drive within the region you specify on your enrollment form.

This is definitely a unique concept. If you would like to be considered for this service, just fill out their enrollment form and they will match advertisers to you according to your region.

Be aware that it could be anywhere from 2 weeks to 2 years before they get a sponsor for your car, depending on advertiser interest in your area.

Visit <http://www.autowraps.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Sample of Gourmet Coffee (international)

http://www.1globaljava.com/htmldocs/order/fs_checkout.cfm

Free Cooking Magazine (international)

<http://www.busycooks.com/magazine.html>

Free Sample of Olay Daily Facials (U.S and Canada Only)

http://www.oilofolay.com/dailyfacials/df_Form.html

Free 1 Year Subscription to Boating Life Magazine (U.S and Canada Only)

(offer is good only if you plan on buying a boat within the next year)

<http://www.databoat.com/boatinglife/>

-----SPONSOR-----

Win Lots of Prizes, Including Gift Certificates, Vacations, and More!

Just Enter Your Email Address For Each Prize!

Enter As Many or As Few As You Like!

Visit Win Free Stuff at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/win>

-----SPONSOR-----

Medical Billing Software

Affordable medical software from Medisoft software starting at \$294.00. Free shipping and no tax.

CLICK HERE.

Medical Billing

All in one, web-based practice management and electronic medical records system. Includes billing, scheduling, EMR, prescriptions, and HIPAA...

CLICK HERE.

May 16 - Free Web Site Tracker

-----SPONSOR-----

--- FREE VOICEMAIL FOR YOUR HOME PHONE! --- Stay connected everywhere you go. It's cheaper than the phone company...more powerful than answering machines...it answers your home phone...& retrieves your messages via phone or web. eVoice can forward messages to your email inbox! Sign Up Today for your FREE home voicemail!

<http://jeeves.flycast.com/content/bounce/evoice/penn.html>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Web Site Tracker- Here's a useful service for staying up to date on your favorite web sites! Net Mind will notify you when changes are detected at the web sites you specify. You will be notified via email, pager, cell phone, or personal digital assistant.. your choice!

You can also create a personal page at their web site, which you can log in to to see which of the web sites you are tracking have changed since your last visit. This is a free web based service, so there are no downloads required!

Visit http://www.netmind.com/html/free_mind-it_service.html

Other Freebies

Free Gift (international)
(link is in bottom left corner)
<http://www.atyourbestsurvey.com/>

Free Spaceship Game Download (international)

<http://www.dtek.chalmers.se/~d98peitz/spacehog/index.shtml>

Free Gladiator Screensaver (international)

<http://www.art-tlc.com/gladiator.html>

Free Sample of Petal Soap (U.S Only)

(link is at the bottom)

<http://www.petalsoap.com/>

-----SPONSOR-----

Get The Best Internet Deals Delivered In Your Inbox!

Visit Bargain Dog at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/bargaindog>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 17 - Free Magazine Portal

-----SPONSOR-----

<http://www.HOW-NOT-TO.com> The web is a great resource for information, recreation and shopping you just need to know HOW-NOT-TO get lost! HOW-NOT-TO surf aimlessly through hundreds of lousy web sites! HOW-NOT-TO waste your time online! - HOW-NOT-TO go to the mall! HOW-NOT-TO be dissapointed with the time you spend online! Visit <http://www.HOW-NOT-TO.com>, you may never go back to the big search engines. We've found the best sites for you at:

<http://www.HOW-NOT-TO.com>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Magazine Portal - Here's a useful service that will save you a lot of time when sifting through magazines. If you don't have time or the money to subscribe to magazines, you can use this service which is a huge search engine of magazine articles. Just type in the keyword of what you are searching for and this search engine will return recently published articles that are relevant to your search.

If you want to personalize the service, you can create a free account, which will help you keep track of your articles. However, registration is not required to take full advantage of this cool service!

Visit <http://magportal.com/>

Other Freebies

250 Free Full Color Business Cards (U.S Only)
http://www.vistaprint.com/vp/free_cards.stm

Free Mrs. Fields Cookie For Kids On Your Birthday (U.S Only)
<http://www.mrsfields.com/corporate/birthdayclub/>

Free Florsheim Shoes Coupon (U.S Only)
<http://www.florsheim.com/coupon.html>

Free Sample of Red Hawaiian Tea (U.S Only)
<http://www.revolutiontea.com/sample.html>

-----SPONSOR-----

Win Maid Service For A Year!

Visit <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/maid>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 18 - Free Kevin Bacon Games

-----SPONSOR-----

Photographs in a jumble? You need FlipAlbum!

It's the easiest way to organize pictures. Just select a folder & a 3D book-like album with thumbnails will appear! You can even email them. Download it FREE now!
<http://opt-influence.com/a/softflip2/>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Kevin Bacon Games - Everyone's probably familiar with the classic Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon Game, although no one is quite sure why Kevin Bacon was picked to star in this game - maybe it's because Kevin Bacon has appeared in so many movies.

For those not familiar with the game, the basic premise is that you can connect any actor/actress past or present with Kevin Bacon in six steps or less. Just enter the name of any actor or actress and

see if you can fool them. The more obscure the name, the better but it is very difficult to fool this game.

Visit <http://www.cs.virginia.edu/oracle/>

For even more fun, try this game to try to connect your own name with Kevin Bacon in six steps or less....)

<http://www.brunching.com/toys/toy-bacondegrees.html>

Other Freebies

Free Online Talking Dictionary (international)

<http://dictionary.msn.com/>

Free 1 Year Magazine Subscription (U.S Only)
(18 different magazine subscriptions to choose)

<http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/mags>

Free Jokemon Trading Card Stickers (international)

<http://www.websampler.com/jokemon/>

Free T-Shirt (U.S Only)

<http://www.ebates.com/survey.jsp>

-----SPONSOR-----

Discover the Healing Benefits of Shark Cartilage!

Shark Cartilage Helps To Halt Certain Types of Cancer!

Request Your Free Info About Shark Cartilage!

Visit <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/shark>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 19 - Free Live Events

-----SPONSOR-----

Register to WIN one of 4 WEEKEND GETAWAYS at Respond.com! We can help you find everything you need for summer! Looking for outdoor furniture? Sporting equipment? Summer travel? You name it and we'll help you find it with less work. At Respond.com, you can "shop by request" to get exactly what you want! Click below to enter today!
<http://www.respond.com/d/promotions/getoutdoors.html?ps=pmgo>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Live Events - Although this free service prides itself on delivering completely free live events on the net, they also have archived events in case you miss something.

They have several different channels to match your interests including various sporting events, movies (feature length and shorts), music stations to listen to while you surf, and even a space channel among many others!

In order to view the streaming media, you will need to have the Real Player installed on your computer, which can be downloaded from their web site for free!

Visit <http://www.liveonthenet.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Allergy Kit and Gift (international)
<http://www.zyrtec.com/kit/>

Free Compact Mirror (U.S and Canada Only)
<http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/reflect>

Free Nicorette Stop Smoking Kit (U.K Only)
<http://www.nicorette.co.uk/consumer/fresh.html>

Free Sample of Weight Loss Pill (U.S Only)
<http://www.dietez.com/contact.htm>

-----SPONSOR-----

Stop Missing Phone Calls While Online!

Get The Free Internet Answering Machine!

Visit CallWave at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/callwave>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 20 - 21 - Not Published On Weekends

May 22 - Free Movie Poster Quiz

-----SPONSOR-----

Photographs in a jumble? You need FlipAlbum!

It's the easiest way to organize pictures. Just select a folder & a 3D book-like album with thumbnails will appear! You can even email them. Download it FREE now!

<http://opt-influence.com/a/softflip2/>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Movie Poster Quiz - Here's a fun game that tests your knowledge of popular movie posters from the past. View the posters and try to correctly guess the name of the movie depicted in the poster. There are 4 possible answers to choose from..be one of the three highest scores each month and you will win a Poster Quiz T-Shirt! It doesn't look like this site uses any fancy java or anything, so everyone should be able to play this game!

Visit <http://www.posterquiz.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Online Version of Space Invaders (international)
(requires shockwave to play)

<http://www.onshore.com/main/multimedia/invaders.shtml>

Free Sample of Gold Class Endurance High Gloss Car Wax
(U.S and Canada Only)

http://www.meguiars.com/endurance/endurance_sample.cfm

Free Printable Fitness USA Coupon Good For Free Visit(U.S Only)

<http://www.fitnessusa.com/COUPON.html>

Free 1.00 Oxy Coupon (U.S Only)

<http://www.oxyoxygen.com/coupon/oxy1.html>

-----SPONSOR-----

Win Up To 10 Million in the GroupLotto Jackpot!

It's Free to Play...Just Select 6 Numbers or Fast Pick!

Visit GroupLotto at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/group>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 23 - Free Mortgage Information

-----SPONSOR-----

Announcement:

How Well Do You Really Know Someone?

Gain The Control And Confidence You Need With
Crimcheck.Com. Conduct Background Checks On The Important
People In Your Life Significant Other, Baby-sitter, Potential
Business Partner. In Today's World It Really Is The Smart Choice.
You Need To Make Tough Decisions For A Tough World. You
Need Crimcheck.Com
<http://www.crimcheck.com>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Mortgage Information - Whether you have a question about
fixed rate mortgages or you want to know how much of a monthly
mortgage you can afford, this site will answer those questions.

Mortgage101 provides a wealth of information whether or not you
already own your own home or are thinking about it! This site has
calculators, financing options, insurance info, and a lot more. This
site is a great resource that might come in handy one day. It's
definitely worth a bookmark.

Visit <http://www.mortgage101.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Yahoo Online Auctions Book (U.S Only)
<http://promotions.yahoo.com/promotions/auctionsbook2/>

Free Sample Promotional Items for Businesses Only (U.S Only)
<http://www.zpromo.com/>

Free T-Shirt for College Students and High School Seniors Only
(U.S Only)
<http://www.edu.com/offers/>

Free Sample Copy of Happiness Magazine (international)
<http://www.happiness.com/enter.asp?newuser=1>

-----SPONSOR-----

You could WIN a Palm Pilot V and a Compaq Presario laptop
computer! Come to OnMoney.com to see and manage all your
accounts in one place. Bring together all your banking, investing,
credit card, insurance and reward program accounts into a single,

easy-to-use statement.
<http://www.clk4.com/cgi-bin/conv.pl?7896>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 24 - Free Video Production Software

-----SPONSOR-----

*** Admins-SIMPLIFY your work day. Go to OfficeClick.com.*** ---
 -----> Arrange TRAVEL <-----> Buy SUPPLIES <----->
 -----> Ship PACKAGES and <-----> Exchange IDEAS with
 other admins <----- OfficeClick.com -- where admins get it all
 done.

<http://ads23.focalink.com/SmartBanner/page?16565.27>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Video Production Software - Here's a free software download that will enable you to create videos of up to 5 minutes in length on your computer. Their Personal Producer software makes it easy to transform your present video into a 5 minute masterpiece.

In order to create your video, you can use either a video recorder or even a video cam to create original footage. The video you create will be converted to a Tranz Send movie format, and this site will also host your finished masterpiece.

Visit <http://www.mypersonaltv.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Coffee (U.S Only)
<http://www.pshift.net/coffee.asp>

Free 10 Minute Phone Card (U.S Only)
<http://www.callyourgrandma.com/>

Free T-Shirt (U.S Only, 10,000 to be given away)
<http://www.brandfans.com/>

Free Tampax Samples (international)
 (link is in the middle to the right)
<http://www.tampax.com/>

-----SPONSOR-----

Newer car. Bigger house. Louder stereo. Cheaper credit card.
 Longer vacation. Creditland.com
<http://www.clk4.com/cgi-bin/conv.pl?8207>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 25 - Free Maps & Driving Directions

-----SPONSOR-----

****WIN an HP Scanner-a-day!****

Forget about sending Dad another tie this Fathers Day... send him a personalized photo ZingCard. Every time you send a FREE ZingCard between now and June 21, 2000, you are automatically entered in our DAILY drawing for an HP scanner.
<http://opt-influence.com/a/zing4/>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Maps & Driving Directions - Whether you travel for business or leisure across state lines or only in the city you live, this site will provide you with useful maps and driving instructions that you can print from your computer. Just type in your origin and where you want to go, and it will generate a map in seconds.

This site has recently expanded to include a lot of other nice features such as live traffic reports in select cities, national park guides, as well as airport terminal maps. You can even email and fax driving directions to your friends. This is a very useful service that seems to be getting better and better, so it's definitely worth checking out.

Visit <http://www.mapquest.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Drawing Hand Screensaver (international)
<http://www.4free4you.com/drawinghand.html>

Free Water Bottle (U.S Only)
http://www.sportsfever.com/sfv_special_frame.html

Free 1.00 Coupon for Lighthouse Food Products (international)
 (link is located at the right on the bottom menu)
<http://www.lighthousefoods.com/>

Free Nature's Plus Coupons (U.S Only)
<http://www.natplus.com/moreinfo/index.html>

-----SPONSOR-----

Win Free Fish Tackle...New Winners Chosen Every Week!

<http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/bigfish>

-----SPONSOR-----

May 26 - Free Gameshow For 1 Million Dollars

-----SPONSOR-----

Win A Brand New Pentium III Computer...Contest Ends 5/31 !

Visit Monthly Contests at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/pentium>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Gameshow For 1 Million Dollars - If you've been waiting for Regis Philbin to call, now you don't have to wait any longer. This site was played for the first time last Sunday and one person walked away from her computer 1 million dollars richer.

Although there are a lot of gameshow style sites on the web, this one is the most unique that I have ever seen. Basically, this company has developed a new technology that allows as many as 2 million people to be playing at the same time.

The best part is that you do not compete against 2 million people at the same time. You only compete against one person at a time. If you beat your opponent, then you advance to the next round where you compete against another opponent, etc until it comes down to the last 2 players. The last person left at the end of the game is the 1 million dollar winner!

In order to win each round, you have to answer 3 trivia questions, and the person who answers the most in the quickest time moves on to the next round. Since you are only playing against one person at a time, this really levels the playing field and gives everyone an equal opportunity!

You can register for this site any time during the week, however each game is only played 1 time a week - Sunday 8p.m to 9p.m

EST. Be sure to log on 10 minutes before the start of the game to compete in the elimination rounds and possibly for your chance in the 1 million dollar round!

This game does require that you install their software on your computer in order to play. This web site was featured on Good Morning America this past Thursday and it looks like a lot of fun!

Visit <http://www.goldpocket.com>

Other Freebies

Free Project Organizer (U.S Only)
<http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/project>

Free Nutrition Facts Download (international)
(nutritional info on over 6200 foods)
<http://www.silvertriad.com/>

Register For Free Diaper Coupons (U.S Only)
<http://www.drypers.com/inside/listen.html>

Free Online S.W.A.T Game (international)
(requires shockwave, many different levels)
http://www.romeodesign.com/gam_s3.html

-----SPONSOR-----
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Do You Want To Start Your Day On A Positive Note? Come join the BEST mailing lists on the internet! * Uplifting Stories - Humor - Toons - Quotes * SEVEN GREAT LISTS TO CHOOSE FROM!
<http://www.self-worth.com/join.htm>

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May 27 - 28 - Not Published On Weekends

May 29 - Free Sports Highlights

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Get 2 Completely Free Romance Novels!

Visit eHarlequin at <http://www.freebie-of-the-day.com/freebooks>

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Free Sports Highlights - Here's a cool site that will save you a lot of time sitting in front of the t.v. watching ESPN. Basically, you can create your very own sports highlights of games in any of the major leagues such as MLB, NBA, NFL, or NHL.

Once you register, just select the teams you want to watch, and any time you visit their site you will get the latest highlights from the teams you selected. This site does require extensive use of shockwave and real player, all of which can be downloaded from their site for free!

The major drawback to this site is that you have to have at least a 128KBS connction to the internet which will probably not include a lot of households at the moment.

Visit <http://www.seasonticket.com/>

Other Freebies

Free Music CD (international)
<http://www.garageband.com/>

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<http://www.bluesuitmom.com/sample.html>

Free T-Shirt For Women (international)
<http://www.size911.com/>

Free Burpee Herb Seeds (U.S Only)
<http://www.burpee.com/freeseed.asp>

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May 30 - Free Joe Dimaggio Game

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 you'll find travel excitement in every issue. Tips, specialized
 destinations, stories & more. THEY'RE ALL FREE!
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Free Joe Dimaggio Game - Of course, Joe Dimaggio holds the
 record for the most hits in consecutive games (56 to be exact).
 But can you step up to the plate and beat this record?

This is a cool shockwave game that puts you at the plate to see if
 you can break Joe Dimaggio's record. It does require shockwave
 to be installed on your computer and should provide a few
 minutes of entertainment!

Visit
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/dimaggio/sfeature/game_intro.html

Other Freebies

Free Garden Woogle (U.S Only)
<http://www.maryscorner.com/kidpromo/>

Free Sample of VitaGravy For Dogs (international)
 (link is in the middle of the page)
<http://www.vitagravy.com/index1.html>

Free Umbrella (U.S Only)
<http://www.antiquesamerica.com/survey/>

Free Table Pad Kit (U.S Only)
<http://www.tablepads.com/freetkit.htm>

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May 31 - Free Multi-Page Browsing

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<http://jeeves.flycast.com/content/bounce/evoice/pentxt3.html>

-----SPONSOR-----

Free Multi-Page Browsing- Here's an incredibly useful service that will save you a lot of time viewing your favorite web sites. Quickbrowse is a free web based service that will put all of the web sites you visit on one single page so you can view them all together at the same time without wasting your time clicking to each site individually!

To make your life even easier, it remembers the web site addresses that you give it, and it will send you a "masterpage" of all of those sites via email on a schedule that you designate! If you prefer, you can even bookmark your "masterpage" so that you can start it with one click!

To get started, just fill out the short registration.

Warning: This site is currently undergoing upgrades, so access to the site may be limited. If you have trouble accessing this site, you may want to bookmark it and visit later!

Visit http://www.quickbrowse.com/cgi-bin/aqb_html_welcome.pl

Other Freebies

Free Sample of Hugo Fragrance For Men and Women
(international, site does require shockwave)

<http://www.hugo.com>

Free Printable Coupon For A Free Eddie Bauer Keychain
(U.S Only, offer is good from July 1 - July 31)

http://www.eddiebauer.com/journal/coupon_6.asp

Free Sample of CoverGirl TripleLipstick (U.S Only)

<http://www.covergirl.com/triplelip/>

Free Magazine Subscription For Dads (international)
(FirstTime Dad and Modern Dad magazines)

<http://www.dadsworld.com/>

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McGill News

ALUMNI QUARTERLY

SPRING 1999

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With McGill's "family" including more than 120,000 alumni living in over 170 countries around the world, the McGill Alumni Association finds itself with a lot of ground to cover when it comes to keeping in touch with graduates and letting them know about the programs and benefits it provides.

These programs are important and useful to both the University and its graduates, as well as to current and future McGill students. Money raised from many of our services goes to support fellowships and the on-campus work-study program for students; it also allows us to offer our alumni fun and educational events and activities. And in many cases, graduates can profit from discounts and advantages not available elsewhere. Alumni services and activities have been growing steadily, so here's an update on what's available -- from gym memberships to luxury cruises, alumni receptions to digital PCS phones, a new McGill Affinity credit card and much more...

If you want to keep your children close to the family, what do you do? You write them, you call them on the phone, you go to see them, and you invite them to come back whenever they can. That's the same thing we should do in a good alumni program.

-- the late D. Lorne Gales, BA'32, BCL'35, LLD'79, former Executive Director of the Graduates' Society of McGill University (now the Alumni Association) and former Director of Development.

Worldwide MAA Branches, Contacts and Activities



First up is the worldwide network of branches that allow the Alumni Association to reach out internationally. Alumni branches are regional groups of graduates and friends who keep fellow alumni informed about the University and get them involved in social, educational, charitable and community service activities.

There are 98 branches of the Alumni Association across the globe, providing international contacts and networking opportunities for graduates. Whether you're in Tokyo, Nairobi, Atlanta or Toronto, there's usually a member of an Alumni Association chapter who's willing to help out.

Many chapters of the Alumni Association regularly host events for graduates, friends and family, with visits from McGill leaders, famous grads, professors and leading researchers. It might be a dinner reception with the Principal, or a get-together with fellow Health Science graduates to hear the latest news about the Faculty of Medicine from the Dean. It could be a visit from astronaut and McGill grad Dave Williams, BSc'76, MSc'83, MDCM'83, on hand to teach kids about his trip aboard the space shuttle Columbia. Or it could be an aquarium tour with renowned biologist and McGill professor Amanda Vincent. Guided museum tours, wine tasting events, mountain hikes, golf tournaments, Internet workshops, pub crawls or cooking classes: you name it, an Alumni branch has done it.

For information on worldwide branches of the McGill Alumni Association, call (514) 398-3008 or e-mail trishd@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca.

You can also find a list of branches and contacts on the "Alumni & friends" website at ww2.mcgill.ca/alumni/.

In addition to branches around the world, the Montreal-area associations offer a constant and varied roster of activities and events. Groups like the McGill Society of Montreal, McGill Young Alumni, the Macdonald branch, the McGill Women's Alumnae Association and the Alumni Association itself regularly feature lectures, receptions, nights on the town and all kinds of events for graduates. Many of the events are family-oriented



activities as well, such as the "Mad Science" workshops or cabane à sucre outings.

The Robert Vogel Lecture Series presented by the Alumni Association and the McGill Society of Montreal is always well attended, and features prominent members of the McGill community providing a diverse mix of fascinating talks on current events, science, the arts and more. The McGill Young Alumni recently offered a guided tour of the Monet exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and at the other end of the scale, the McGill Society of Montreal hosted a forensic medicine evening with Kathy Reichs, author of the gruesome bestseller *Déjà Dead*.

Upcoming events planned by the McGill Society of Montreal include a two-part "Antiques Roadshow" featuring a panel discussion on silver, china, porcelain and crystal, with guest antique experts, on April 28. On May 1, graduates can bring in their personal treasures to be appraised, Roadshow-style. And don't forget that October classic brought to you by the McGill Women's Alumnae Association and the Women Associates of McGill -- the McGill Book Fair always brings out hundreds of eager book buyers (and a fair number of book sellers!) looking for great bargains. Last year the two-day fair raised \$55,000 for scholarships.

Last but certainly not least is Homecoming. Each year thousands of graduates return to both McGill campuses to join in lively class reunions, yuk it up at the Leacock Luncheon, cheer on the Redmen at the Homecoming football game, and much more, with all events organized by Alumni Association staff and hundreds of graduate volunteers.

For information on Montreal-area activities of the McGill Alumni Association, call (514) 398-8288, or e-mail christib@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca.

Financial and Insurance Services



McGill Affinity VISA card

The Alumni Association now offers a McGill Affinity VISA card from the Royal Bank, allowing you to support McGill every time you use the card. With each purchase you make with your Royal Bank McGill VISA, a percentage goes to the University.

The credit card program is open to the entire McGill family including students, alumni, faculty, staff and friends. This new program replaces the old affinity Mastercard.

There are three cards available: VISA Classic (no fee), VISA Gold (no fee), and VISA Gold Preferred (annual fee).

Depending on the card you choose you can get



exclusive savings at Royal Bank VISA Partner locations, automatic purchase security insurance, extended warranty insurance, worldwide cash access, automatic insurance on rental cars, travel accident insurance and more.

For more information or an application form, please contact Alumni Services at (514) 398-1578 or e-mail cynthias@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca.

Home and Auto Insurance

As a McGill graduate, you can take advantage of group rates on insurance. McGill Alumni insurance programs are open to all graduates and their spouses.



Meloche Monnex insurance brokers offer quality insurance at competitive group rates. Their service includes interest-free monthly preauthorized payments, and an appraisal service for auto damages, when and where it's most convenient. Clients are entitled to a Meloche Monnex card that provides access to their Assistance Service 24 hours a day, seven days a week from anywhere in the world.

Meloche Monnex also offers travel and small business insurance.

For a free quotation, call Meloche Monnex at 1-800-361-3821 in Quebec or 1-800-268-8955 in the rest of Canada and ask for the group representative for McGill.

Insurance for U.S. Alumni

In response to many requests from our U.S.-based grads, the Alumni Association is beginning to offer some services south of the border. The first of these is an insurance program from the U.S.-based company, Amica, which includes home, auto, marine and liability insurance for U.S. residents and seasonal homeowners.



We plan on adding more services for U.S. grads in the near future, so stay tuned.

For more information, call Amica at 1-800-24-AMICA and ask for the representative for McGill alumni.

Life Insurance and Health & Dental Insurance



The Manulife McGill Alumni Life Insurance plan includes Term Life Insurance and Major Accident Protection for graduates and their spouses. You can also apply for Income Protection coverage and Child Life and Accident coverage. This McGill Alumni Association plan can provide you with basic insurance protection, or can supplement any existing coverage you may

have.

The Alumni Association and Manulife are also offering an Alumni Health and Dental Plan. Coverage includes prescriptions drugs, hospital stays, convalescence, nursing, prescription eyewear, travel emergencies, physiotherapy, basic and major dental work, and more. The insurance is available to alumni and their spouses who are under 61 years of age and resident in Canada, as well as any dependent children under age 25.

Note: As of March 1, 1999, anyone insured with Crown Canada (formerly Crown Life) through the MAA will automatically be upgraded to the Manulife Financial insurance plan.

For brochures and detailed information, contact Manulife at 1-800-668-0195, or if you are calling from the Toronto area, 1-416-229-3000.

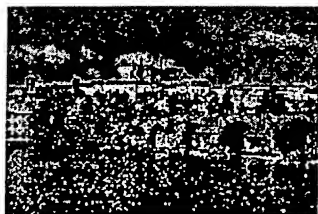
If you have questions about any of the above programs, you can contact Alumni Services at (514) 398-1578, or e-mail cynthias@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca.

Travel the World

Begun 35 years ago, the McGill Alumni Travel Program offers top quality tours for graduates with a goal of encouraging "lifetime learning" through travel. The program provides a combination of discovery, adventure and educationally oriented travel opportunities, allowing graduates to expand their cultural and intellectual horizons in the good company of fellow alumni, family and friends.



In the early years, the program offered two to three trips each year. Today, that number has grown to 15 to 20 a year, and features voyages like a safari in Kenya, cruises of the Grenadines or New Zealand and Australia, a Classical Renaissance tour with stops in Sorrento, Rome, Florence and Venice, or a trip to the "roof of the world" visiting Nepal and Tibet.



This is a very popular program full of unusual destinations and tours: group travellers often have access to trips and excursions that would be difficult or time-consuming for solo travellers to organize. The program also emphasizes variety, so no matter what your interest may be, you're bound to find a trip that suits you. For example, there are cruises on large ships (1,500 passengers) or smaller craft (80 passengers). People can choose from land excursions where they can stay in one hotel and explore one geographic area, or excursions that involve a variety of stops along the way. The "alumni college" trips are always popular, combining travel with an educational component made up of tours, lectures, seminars and other cultural activities. This year the college locations include Aix-en-Provence, historic Ennis in Ireland's County Clare, Tuscany, and the Greek island of Poros.

All tours are offered by the finest wholesale operators. McGill University sponsorship means that a tour company has met criteria for established reputation, professional staff, quality operations and dependability. Whenever possible, the program offers faculty lecturers, hosts and special events. Destinations change from year to year, and spots are limited so be sure to contact us early to avoid disappointment!

The program is open to all interested travellers. For information and brochures, please contact the Alumni Travel Program at (514) 398-8961 or e-mail donnah@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca.

Get Wired -- Communications Services

ClearNET Digital PCS Phone



The Alumni Association has just introduced this new program for

graduates who want a wireless phone to keep in touch wherever they may be. Digital PCS phones are quickly replacing the old analog cellular phone technology. These new phones have many features: caller ID, call waiting and call forwarding, voice mail, e-mail messaging and three-way calling. McGill Telecom and the Alumni Association have chosen ClearNET as their supplier and alumni can get this PCS phone service for \$20 a month. Sign up now and get a free leather carrying case with the McGill coat of arms. There are often other national ClearNET gift-with-purchase programs to take advantage of, so be sure to check with us on what's available.

For more information, call ClearNET at 1-888-498-3333 and enter the code MAA-01.

Affinity Internet Plan



ACC

Everyone is exploring the Internet these days and you can, too, with the unlimited Internet access package from ACC. Send e-mail to old friends, surf the web for research or fun, join newsgroups and discussion lists, check out CBC or CNN news online, listen to Internet radio, and shop from

electronic catalogues: the world of cyberspace is expanding at an astonishing rate. The free software package from ACC includes e-mail and web browser programs, and an Internet guide to get you started. Unlimited access is available for \$24.95 per month. If you are also an ACC Long Distance subscriber, you pay only \$19.95, saving \$5 a month. By the way, once you're online, don't forget to visit us on the web at ww2.mcgill.ca/alumni/.

Other packages include:

- 10 hours of Internet access for \$9.95 per month
- 25 hours of Internet access for \$16.95 per month
- Free Web Page Storage for 1 month
- For more information, call ACC at 1-888-274-7920 and ask for the McGill representative.

Affinity Long Distance Savings Plan

Keep in touch! ACC's Long Distance services are available to all McGill alumni, friends, faculty and staff. Select what best suits your needs from a variety of options:

\$20 Unlimited Package

- Pay only 10 cents per minute to a maximum of \$20 per month anywhere in Canada. Monday to Friday from 6 pm to 8 am and all weekend long.

Retro Rates

- 5 cents per minute anywhere in North America, all day Sunday.
- 9 cents per minute anywhere in North America Monday to Friday from 6 pm to 8 am and all day Saturday.
- 20 cents per minute, anywhere in Canada, Monday to Friday from 8 am to 6 pm and anywhere in the U.S., any time Monday to Saturday.

In January, AT&T announced the purchase of ACC but at press time there had been no changes made to the company name or the service programs. Current subscribers will be informed if any changes are planned, and new subscribers can simply call ACC at 1-888-274-7920 and ask for the McGill representative.

If you have questions about any of the above Communications programs, you can contact Alumni Services at (514) 398-1578, or e-mail cynthias@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca.

Alumni Merchandise

McGill Wear -- McGill à porter

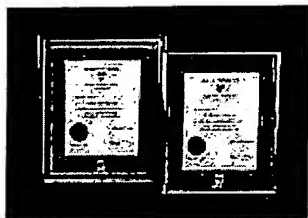
Just can't wait to get a McGill T-shirt or sweatshirt? How about a McGill toque or a pair of flannel boxer shorts for those chillier days? Whatever the weather, you'll be dressed for success. The Alumni Association offers a range of great clothing and merchandise featuring the McGill logo -- from polo shirts to windbreakers to pewter McGill pen holders, you can display your alma mater's colours in style.



For a brochure or more information, call (514) 398-8961 or e-mail donnah@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca.

The merchandise is also online at ww2.mcgill.ca/alumni/.

Diploma Framing Program



After years of hard work and dedication, you've earned your degree! Now, instead of retiring your diploma to the bottom of your sock drawer, you can have this emblem of your achievement framed.

The McGill Alumni Association offers diploma frames that are ready to use and "framer friendly."

You can mount your diploma in a high-quality polished brass frame or a rich walnut wooden frame, complete with red mats emblazoned with the McGill coat of arms.

Prices range from \$60 to \$75.

For more information, call (514) 398-8961 or e-mail donnah@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca.

Health and Fitness

McGill Sports Centre

Want to maintain -- or perhaps regain -- that college-era physique? Graduates can continue to enjoy the outstanding downtown facilities of the McGill Sports Centre, including:

- a 5,500-square-foot, fully equipped Fitness Centre
- 200-metre, six-lane indoor track and field facility
- 25-metre, eight-lane pool with three diving boards
- ten North American squash courts
- a new aerobics room

McGill alumni and spouses receive discounted memberships (4, 8 and 12 month plans available).

Or take an "Active Living" course: you can choose from rock climbing, power yoga, flamenco dancing, and more. There is something for everyone, including the popular kids' program and the summer sports daycamp for children of alumni.

For more information call the Department of Athletics at (514) 398-7000.

Nation-Wide Recreational Facilities

Moving to another Canadian city? As a graduate of McGill you can use athletic and recreation facilities at participating universities across Canada -- and enjoy special discounted alumni rates.



For a list of universities participating in the program, call Alumni Services at (514) 398-1578 or e-mail cynthias@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca.

Alumni on the Web

The Development and Alumni Relations homepage, Alumni & friends, is located at ww2.mcgill.ca/alumni/. If you have Internet access, one of the easiest ways to keep up on the latest news from the Alumni Association is to visit us on the web.

What You'll Find

When you visit the Alumni & friends homepage you'll find descriptions of the services available from the Alumni Association, the latest in alumni travel tours, McGill alumni clothing and merchandise, the online version of the McGill News, and when Home-coming rolls around, a complete schedule of reunion activities.

The homepage also links you to the main McGill page, known as the McGill Gateway, where you can get the latest campus news, spend some time searching the McGill library collections, find out what's happening in your faculty or browse the McGill Archives. You can also refer prospective students to the Gateway where they will find up-to-date information on applying to McGill, on courses, faculty members, programs and scholarships, as well as downloadable application forms. Access the Gateway at ww2.mcgill.ca. Another important address is the site for the Macdonald Branch of the McGill Alumni Association which you will find at www.agrenv.mcgill.ca/society/alumni/.

At Alumni & friends, there is a searchable database for coming events, so you can look for alumni activities by date or location, or simply browse a list of all upcoming events. The listings provide details and contact information and are updated on a regular basis, so don't forget to check the page often for new events.

We are also planning regular news items, discussion forums, and an online alumni e-mail directory for the very near future. If you would like to be listed in the e-mail directory, please contact us by fax at 514-398-7338 or e-mail alumni@martlet1.lan.mcgill.ca and we will let you know how to proceed. (Quebec's privacy laws may require an extra step.)

Keeping In Touch

If you're wondering what your classmates are up to, the Alumnotes from McGill News are also online in a fully searchable format: simply type in the name of your classmate, and if they've submitted an alumnote recently you'll see what's new in their lives. You can also submit your own alumnote or a change of address electronically through handy fill-in forms.

And if you want to contact someone at Development and Alumni Relations, the umbrella area which includes the McGill Alumni Association, there is a staff directory online with names, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses. The directory is searchable by job category as well, so if you're not sure who to contact for a frame for your McGill diploma, for example, simply choose Diploma Framing from the drop-down menu and you'll be given contact information for the person who can help you.

What You Can Do

There is also information on how you can support McGill. Alumni are an important resource for the University, and there are a number of ways you can help out, including hiring a McGill student, serving as a mentor, helping with "send-offs" for students coming from your town to study at McGill, volunteering to help with recruiting, participating in a phonathon and more. For details, see the "Volunteering" section of the homepage under "Supporting McGill."

Branches on the Web

Some of the Alumni Association branches have started putting up their own homepages on the web with news, coming events and branch contact information. You can locate them through the Alumni & friends homepage.

THE REGION AND BORDERLAND

School district attempts to regain land

Leigh Braswell
The Morning News

Rogers school district officials want back what once was theirs.

The old Arkansas National Guard Army at 409 S. 8th St. partially belongs to the school district, but the maintenance shop and the land surrounded by a chain-link fence belong to the guard.

Originally the Rogers district owned the land and buildings on the corner of Cypress and Eighth Street, but it deeded all of it to the guard in 1940 for military use.

The split ownership came about during the early 1960s, when a new armory was built on First Street, and ownership of the primary building on the site reverted to the school district.

David Cauldwell, the district's business manager, has asked for the maintenance building and the silver of land on which it is situated to be returned to the district, since it has not been used by the guard for more than one year.

According to Capt. Donald Mabry, administrator in Harrison, the site will be used for weekend training exercises beginning next month.

ROGERS

Such exercises are scheduled through September 2000, but the guard plans to use the facility indefinitely for such exercises, Mabry said.

The guard used the maintenance facility until the summer of 1998, when training on a new weapon system was done at Fort Chaffee.

The district has used the primary building to house special-education staff, the school for suspended students and for additional activity space.

Current use is limited to storage and minimal maintenance tasks.

A deal could be reached if the district built a new facility on the current armory property. Col. Larry W. Holtom indicated in a letter, dated Sept. 8, responding to Cauldwell's request.

"If absolutely essential to the community's plans for expansion of the school, it might be possible to transfer this piece of property if we could get a replacement building constructed on the new armory grounds," Holtom wrote.

But having the district fund such a project may be illegal, Cauldwell said.

"School funds can only be used for school purposes, and that would be a big question," he said.

Also, an uncertainty is what use the district has for the entire property. Administrators and board members have discussed possibilities that range from renovating the facility to use as a charter school or an alternative school to selling it to reinvest in property for another school, Cauldwell said.

"Whether we remodel it or whether we sell it, it needs to be as the whole piece of land," Cauldwell said.

At the school board's last study session, the general feeling was to sell the property, Cauldwell said.

The most recent county assessment on file is for 1997, when the property just over 1 acre, and buildings were valued at \$120,240.

A 1993 appraisal done for the district valued the property at about \$250,000, Cauldwell said.

Joye Kelley, board member, said she asked Sen. David Bissbee, R-Rogers, to get involved, possibly speaking with Arkansas National Guard representatives and Gov. Mike Huckabee.

LEIGH BRASWELL can be reached at lbraswell@nwonline.net

Mother pleased with Traffic Committee's decision

Jeff Niese
The Morning News

SPRINGDALE

LaRita Patterson's fear nearly became a reality last week when she saw a tractor-trailer rumble down her street headed for her daughter, who was crossing the street to ride the morning bus to school.

"If I hadn't pulled her back, she would have been under that truck," Patterson said. Wednesday after talking to Springdale's Traffic Committee.

Patterson, who lives at 218 Rhodes Ave., was delighted Wednesday after the traffic committee voted to install a three-way stop at the intersection that her daughter crosses every day.

"This is a short-term solution," Patterson said. "But it is a start."

The stop signs will be installed where Spring Street runs into Rhodes Avenue, just north of Huntville Avenue and the City Administration Building.

In addition to the signs, a crosswalk will be designated across Spring.

Currently there is only one stop sign at the intersection. That sign, which is on Rhodes Avenue east of the Spring Street intersection, will be moved farther east, allowing for a larger intersection.

"We looked at the situation, and

this is what the street department came up with," Street Superintendent Dana Sahl said Wednesday regarding the three-way stop.

Sahl added that the signs should be installed by next week.

Patterson said the problem is that tractor-trailers use the intersection to enter Pappas Foods, which is off Rhodes Avenue.

She also said that vehicles, besides trucks, speed down Spring Street before turning onto Rhodes Avenue.

"There is going to be a child killed, and I am worried that it will be mine," Patterson told the committee.

At Wednesday's meeting, committee members agreed to explore

optional routes for trucks going to the company.

"It is dangerous, and I think there is a better truck route," said Michael Hall, a resident in the area.

"They're not compatible, the trucks, with old people and kids."

Sahl said city employees will consider whether a truck route can be constructed from Pappas Foods, along the railroad tracks to Huntville Avenue.

In the meantime, Lt. Ken Watson said the Springdale Police Department will patrol more aggressively in the area.

JEFF NIESE can be reached at jniese@nwonline.net

Study: 5 percent of Oklahomans need alcohol-abuse treatment

The Associated Press

OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA CITY — More people in Oklahoma need treatment for alcohol abuse than for the misuse of any other kind of drug, a new study released Wednesday shows.

Of the state's 2.4 million adults, nearly 132,000, or 5 percent of the population, demonstrated a need for alcohol treatment, the survey by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services said.

Another 2 percent, or 33,000 people, need treatment for other types of drug use, it showed.

"Alcohol is our biggest problem and always has been," Substance Abuse Services Director Dennis Doyle said. "It's a cultural thing,

pure and simple, but it's difficult for many people to even think of alcohol as being a drug."

"It's much easier to talk about the problems associated with methamphetamine, cocaine and inhalants than it is to acknowledge that alcohol is, in fact, more deadly than any illicit drug."

The \$875,000 study spanned five years of research regarding substance abuse in Oklahoma, and was done in association with the University of Oklahoma Center for Economic and Management Research and the OU College of Public Health's Biostatistics and Epidemiology Department.

The report, the first of its kind in the state, was funded by the national Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, and involved a random telephone survey of 8,400 Oklahomans over the age of 18, as well as face-to-face interviews with 1,800 prison inmates, probationers and parolees, said Dr. Warren Dickson, the agency's needs-assessment project manager.

Some 1,660 American Indians were included in the study, the agency said.

Other findings show Oklahomans' use of stimulants, such as methamphetamine, is significantly higher than the national average, particularly in the 25-34-year age range.

The use of alcohol and marijuana is about the same as the national average, the study showed.

The use of opiates, cocaine, hallucinogens, sedatives and inhalants was lower than the national average for most age groups, the study showed.

Train wreck kills two people

The Associated Press

OKLAHOMA

MUSKOGEE, Okla. — Two people were killed and another person was injured when a pickup truck collided with a freight train Wednesday in Muskogee.

The pickup was traveling east on Oklahoma 16 shortly after noon when a line of freight cars was backing up on the tracks, said Muskogee police Cpl. Reggie Cotton.

The train rammed into the truck as it tried to cross the

tracks. Two people were dead at the scene and another person was flown to a Tulsa hospital. Identities were not immediately released, Cotton said.

The crossing had signal lights, but it was not immediately known if the lights were working, he said.

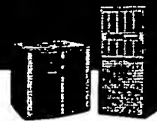
There were some witnesses, and we are still interviewing them," Cotton said Wednesday afternoon.

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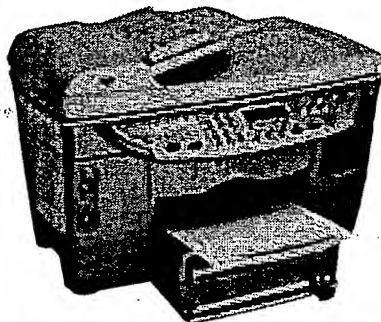
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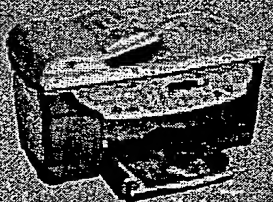
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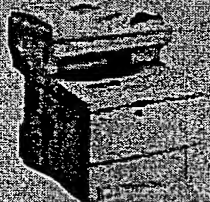


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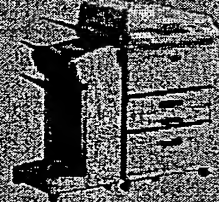


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